

THE CALL OF THE REMNANT

THE CALL OF THE REMNANT
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MAY 2011

Published by
Good Samaritan Fellowship
H2 / 22, Mahavir Enclave
New Delhi - 110 045
India
Tel : 011-2503-4946 / 2503-2928

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Printed at
New Life Printers Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi
011 - 27651897

The Call
— *of* —
The Remnant



J O Y T H O M A S

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chapter one

HOLDING FAST - TO HIS VOICE



THE VOICE OF A TRUMPET

*Revelation 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day,
and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,*

This verse highlights the importance of being found in the Spirit in the house of God. It shows how important and significant it is for each one of us to be found in the Spirit in God's house. It is only when we are found in the Spirit in the gatherings that we can hear what the Lord has to say to us. That is when we shall hear a great Voice as of a trumpet.

There are many voices that we can hear just where we are. The air is filled with voices that can be heard if we are tuned to them. Let me illustrate this from the sounds we can hear from a radio set. When we tune the dial of a radio,

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we choose a certain frequency and the radio catches any voice on that specific wavelength or frequency. In other words, we can choose to hear the voice we want to hear by tuning to the appropriate frequency. Your radio set picks up the sound on the frequency that has been set by you. The radio set is tuned to the frequency that you have set, thus showing **that the sound you hear is a matter of your own choice and deliberation.** The radio picks up the broadcast on the frequency that you have tuned into. There are many voices in the air in the form of radio short waves and long waves, but the broadcast you are able to hear only reflects the choice you have made by tuning the dial on the radio set. It is easy to understand from this illustration that though **there are many broadcasts (voices) in the air clamouring for your attention at the same time, you are able to hear only one voice. And that is the voice you have tuned into.** In this example, it is picked up by the radio and comes to you as a voice that has been broadcast over the air. It is all a matter of deliberately choosing the appropriate frequency by the use of the tuning knob on the radio set. **In other words, what you choose is what you hear!**

Today there are many religious and spiritual voices all around us bellowing like trumpets for our attention. There are many voices right here in the place where you are. Some voices will suggest how to make more money; other voices will tell you how to be successful in worldly ways; and there are yet some voices that sound genuine, but they are not so. What we hear depends upon where we tune our ears to hear. Some religious voices will tell us to hear them even though they do not like our spiritual stance. Satan will



convey many lies through these voices. They pour out messages that will keep you in anxieties, bitterness and bondages. Satan's broadcasts continue throughout the day and night, 24x7. There is no let up. All these negative voices scream for our attention and hence we have to be very careful what we hear.

Saints, be aware that we can sit in this house of God and yet tune our ears to many other voices. We can change the wavelength and hear different voices without any effort. It is all a matter of tuning our hearts and spirits to what we want to hear. We can even tune in to the voice of our own conscience that tells us what we ought to do. It is easy to rotate the dial of our mind's radio and tune in to whatever we want to hear, and thus spend the time in God's house hearing something quite different from whatever God is speaking. Beloved, this clearly reveals that we need to deliberately choose to hear the voice of God in His house and in our life. **It would need positive deliberations from our side to hear His voice.** Remember, God will not force us to hear His voice. This is very important. **Being present in God's house does not mean that we are automatically tuned to His voice.** Deliberations are necessary from our side.

Many times believers say they cannot hear God's voice in their lives. It is not because God has stopped speaking; but they have missed to hear His voice. The Holy Spirit is dwelling in every child of God; furthermore, the grace of God, and the anointing of the Spirit are available to each one. In spite of such great privileges, many miss the voice of God. **God is ever willing to speak to His people, but**

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the minds of many believers are focused upon their self interests and the things of this world. It is because their ears are given to all those other things that many miss His voice; they tune their ears to other voices instead of His precious voice. The interests of the world and the self drown the voice of God that comes as a tiny, small voice in our lives. If we are not able to hear His voice, it is not because God does not want to speak to us, but because we are hearing other voices that appeal to our own desires and obscure or hide His precious voice in our lives.

I have noticed that many brothers and sisters miss the voice of the Spirit in the gatherings. They miss the emphasis of the Spirit. The Spirit conveys His burden in many ways. He may speak to us personally, or He may also bring His mind and His thought to us collectively. God expects His people to hear His voice corporately, to know what He has upon His heart, to know the way in which His directions are conveyed to us, and to promptly respond in obedience to His voice. This is one side. The other side of it is that God wants to correct us, instruct us and teach us many things that we need to know personally at the same time. The personal and the corporate voices are always so inter-related. In those areas, our individual obedience is also connected to the corporate obedience. We can see how important our hearing is to the Lord, how vital it is to be tuned to the Lord, and how much we should be actively alive in our spirit to the ministrations of the Spirit.

In the Book of Revelation, John says that he was in the Spirit and heard His voice. John heard the voice of the Lord like the sound of trumpet. That is something that provoked



my heart. God's voice was so loud and clear to John because he was fine-tuned to the voice of the Spirit. **If we are in the Spirit, actively alive in our spirit to the Spirit of God, then the still small voice will sound like a trumpet in our ears. The hungry heart will hear Him loud and clear.** It will be a loud, a clear and a piercing sound to their ears. Beloved, if our ears have been pierced at the door of His house, we shall never miss hearing His voice. To the bond servant who hears the whispers of his master, the voice of the Master would be like a trumpet sound in his ears. The Lord opens the ears of those who have committed their hearing to Him. On the other hand, when we are not actively alive and tuned to the Lord, even a sound as loud as that of a trumpet will be like the sound of a pin falling to the ground. Many are not able to hear God's voice like a loud trumpet sound because they are deaf to His voice, and **even 'the blast of a trumpet' would pass unheard.** Are you missing the voice of the Lord in your life? Have you become so deaf spiritually that you cannot even hear 'the blast of a trumpet'? If so, you need to close your ears to other voices and tune them to the Spirit. Each one of us needs to make a deliberate choice to hear Him above all other voices at all times.

The Lord says in His word, "*My sheep heareth My voice*". We cannot blame God if we fail to hear His voice. If you cannot hear God, then there is a need for you to search your soul and your heart. Then, realizing your own condition, you must repent and turn to the Lord and receive His mercy. Let us not miss His voice, individually and corporately. As we remain individually obedient to the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit will bring the details to each one.

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PARTAKERS OF HIS PATIENCE

Revelation 1:9,10

9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet...

John says that he is our companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. We see here a connection between the tribulation, the kingdom and patience. Saints, we have to first enter into fellowship with Jesus in His sufferings and tribulation before we can share His throne with Him in His kingdom. We need patience and John says the patience of Jesus Christ is available to us, for "tribulation worketh patience." Perseverance, endurance, persistence and tolerance are qualities or virtues that we must have to pursue His purpose to the very end.

We read in *Matthew 24:13*, "*But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*" The word 'endure' here has the same meaning as 'persevere.' Perseverance is a great virtue that is emphasized right through the New Testament. In other words, this verse says, "*He that shall persevere till the end shall be saved.*" The "so great salvation", the ultimate salvation in Christ cannot be secured without perseverance and endurance. Those who persevere will



enter into the ultimate and full salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ. This establishes the connection between the tribulation, the kingdom and the patience or perseverance. We can not learn true patience without experiencing suffering, anguish and distress. We have to go through much affliction to attain the virtue of perseverance that will, in turn, take us to greater heights in Christ. We cannot get these virtues by attending meetings and Bible studies. It is not enough to ask the Lord to give us a spirit of perseverance so that we can then move on. God will undoubtedly answer the prayers that you have made to Him at the right time, now or late; but how He will answer our prayers is another matter. We may not like the way He answers our prayer for greater perseverance and patience. As the Scripture says, the trying of our faith brings patience.

James 1:2,3,4

2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

The Amplified Bible makes it amply clear that it is necessary that our faith be tested and proved before we can have patience. A thorough work needs to be done in us to be able to endure all things.

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James 1:2-4 (Amplified) Consider it wholly joyful, my brethren, whenever you are enveloped in or encounter trials of any sort or fall into various temptations. (3) Be assured and understand that the trial and proving of your faith bring out endurance and steadfastness and patience. (4) But let endurance and steadfastness and patience have full play and do a thorough work, so that you may be [people] perfectly and fully developed [with no defects], lacking in nothing.

O the wisdom of God! How unsearchable it is! We are called to partake of His patience, through which we shall enter into the ultimate salvation in Christ Jesus. I know that we all need this work of God in our lives, because we all lack the patience that will bring us to that place in Christ. The Lord makes a way for our faith to be tried, so that the trial of our faith will develop that virtue that God wants us to have, "fully developed, with no defects, lacking nothing".

John says he was a companion in our tribulation. God is calling us to be a companion in the sufferings of Christ. That is how we shall come into that great virtue of patience and perseverance that we see in Christ Jesus. The Lord is speaking this word to us for our good because He knows that it is necessary for the church to hear this in these days when strange and terrible things are happening in the spiritual world. This is not the end, but the beginning of the sorrows that are to come. God is sending His word to us much before the sorrows of tribulation engulf us, so that He may prepare His people. God desires the church to stand in His word in these perilous days.

In Chapters 2 and 3 of *Revelation*, the Lord has many



words of indictment, charges, admonition and warning for the churches, but He has no charge against the church in Smyrna. In His evaluations, there is no blame upon the church in Smyrna; He does not have anything against them; there is nothing for which they need to repent. The Lord has seen nothing that is unworthy in the church, for He says to them, "I know thy works." This implies that the Lord knew many things about them, but none of those things called for an indictment from the Lord. Praise God! That is the kind of church we should aim to be—a church that is pleasing to the Lord!

Revelation 2:8,9,10,11

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.

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Here we find a tremendous message to one of the seven churches in the Book of Revelation. In many ways, it is a very important prophetic word for us in this century. I would like to draw our attention to verse 8, in particular, *"...These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;"*

THE ONE WHO IS IN CONTROL

Notice the way the Lord opens His message to the church in Smyrna. It comes by the mention of the One who is the "first and the last, which was dead and is alive". He is the One who is sending this message to His church. It is important to realize from whom this message is coming. It is coming from the One who has overcome death, who is alive and who has the key to death and life. The One who is the "first and the last" is writing this letter to His church in Smyrna. He is sending this message to the church that is facing opposition, that is suffering persecution, and that is going through extremely trying times. Such a church needs to see the One who is the First and the Last. The Lord knew what that church was going through and facing, and so the Lord first describes Himself as the First and the Last, the One who was dead but is alive. **The church must behold the One who is in control of all events from the beginning to the end, as the One who has also conquered man's great enemy, death!**

Saints, our eyes must be opened to see that He is reaching into our lives with His word in the midst of our situations and perplexities, so that we may know that He is the One who is the First and the Last, who is dead and is yet



living. What does this mean? It means all things are in His control. The need of His people is to see with their spiritual eyes, the One who has the last word in every situation we face, and in every circumstance that we find ourselves. Can we say boldly, “Lord, You are the First and the Last. The last word in my life is Yours—not mine, not someone else’s, not even Satan’s.” What a tremendous confession it is! How necessary it is for our eyes to behold Him who has all things under His control, who knows all things from the beginning to the end, who has conquered the fiercest enemy of all – even death.

God is the One here who is speaking to the church in Smyrna. He knew what the church was called out for, and He knew what lay ahead of them. But He wanted them to behold Him. God is speaking to His church today with the same intention; He is turning to us with the same intent upon His heart. He knows what lies ahead of His church in these perilous days in the end- times. We do not know it. The days are truly evil, iniquity is abounding and the love of many is becoming cold. The remnant of God must behold the One who is the First and the Last, the one who once died but is living forevermore. **If you are not serious in your spiritual life, God will leave you to wallow in your happy times, your leisure, your house, your family, your interests, and your self-absorbing activities.** But if your heart is open to Him to grasp His things, He will introduce situations in your life where you will be drawn to see Him afresh. Saints, be open therefore for God’s highest, be open to His Spirit and His voice; let your eyes be open to see the One who is the First and the Last.

In these verses from the Book of Revelation, the Lord is

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urging His end-time church to keep her eyes upon Him. And saints, that is the greatest need in our lives, as individuals, as families and as a church. May the Lord help us! Today you may be having an easy time in the absence of any kind of trial, but that does not warrant that you can ignore His word. You are going to be in need of this word. It will not go on that for long if you really want to pursue God's calling. I am not envious of you for the good times you are having, because the time is coming when it will not be as easy any more. If you know that the call of God is resting upon you and if you are open to His workings, then your first need is to see Him as the "first and the last". If you are not facing any kind of suffering today, it is only a matter of time for the flood waters to flow your way! So, the Lord's caution is upon each and every one of us to prepare our lives and focus on Him as the One in control of all things and as the Lord of our destiny!





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chapter two

HOLDING FAST - IN TRIBULATION



GOD'S ELITE – THE SPECIAL TARGET OF THE ENEMY

Tribulation is a recurring aspect in the entire Book of Revelation. **It is also a recurring thing in the history of the church.** It is something that is faced by even the most faithful of God's people. **Beloved, we need to understand that it is the faithful of the Lord who will be called to face tribulation; it is not the compromisers, the negotiators and the one who look for the middle ground in this calling that will suffer for the Lord and bear the brunt of tribulation.** John, God's faithful apostle, was banished to the remote isle of Patmos, to suffer for His name. He was left all alone, isolated, and secluded for the Word and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

In the Book of Revelation we find the church in Smyrna, the church against which God had nothing adverse to

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comment, suffering the works of tribulation. The church in Smyrna was a faithful church. It was a faithful company of believers that walked in the ways of the Lord; it was a church against which God found nothing in need of correction. **Notwithstanding, the church was persecuted and this gives us a true picture of the reality.** When a church walks in the ways of the Lord, she will be persecuted, she will be a target for revilers and persecutors and she will not have an easy time. That is what history corroborates. There are atrocities that are committed against the people of God in every land including this one. The reality is that the true church is harassed and persecuted at every step. And let me say that when the Tribulation of the ages comes to pass, the true followers of Christ and the nominal believers will be estranged from one another, and thus the church will stand divided. It is only the true followers who will continue to walk in the ways of the Lord. They will be the real target of those who persecute Christ, because the compromisers will negotiate their way out of the predicaments that the church will come into. Many things will happen to expose the compromisers. This is what happened in Russia, China and many other countries. So I am able to see that there will be rift in the church world. **When real tribulation and persecution come upon God's people and His church, the compromisers will find their way out by opting out of suffering for His testimony. Then the true church that stands for the testimony of the Lord, will be marked out by the powers of darkness as a special target to go against.** I can see that already happening in a way. The true people of God will be at odds with the lukewarm, casual and nominal believers - and that will happen very soon. The worldly churches - the apostate,



compromising churches will have an easy time. But those who are pursuing the Lord will have a hard time.

Revelation 2:9 (KJV) I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

The Amplified Bible has rendered this way:

Revelation 2:9 (Amplified) I know your affliction and distress and pressing trouble and your poverty—but you are rich! and how you are abused and reviled and slandered by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

The Lord knew that the church in Smyrna was going through affliction, distress and pressing troubles. There are three things we clearly see : the church was experiencing tribulation, poverty and blasphemy against them.

Tribulation is a part of God's perfect will for sincere, genuine followers. Persecution is a part of God's perfect will for His people. When we experience suffering, we mustn't feel that something strange is happening to us. **We have to tread the path that other faithful people have taken, for the Lord has allowed the best of the faithful to experience suffering and persecution for His sake.** It was so in the first century and all the nineteen centuries that came after; and it will continue to happen till the conclusion of the end times. **The best of God's children, the overcomers, the true sons, the elite force, the**

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chosen out of many who are called to be His witness on the earth, will experience the worst of the persecution on that day. It will be a time when the Anti-Christ will come forth with deception and falsehood. At that time God will have the best force on the earth to stand as His witness and bear His testimony on the earth. The Lord will have His overcomers company on the earth at that time. Like a general in the army who positions the best troops against the fiercest of enemy troops, the Lord will also place His elite company of believers to battle against the might of the Anti-Christ forces. Where the clouds seem to be the darkest and the battle the fiercest, He will have His best troops. So it is a privilege to be a part of this company of saints in these last days. **God will not rapture them to heaven at a time when He needs them to be here on the earth. God has not done that in the past nor will He do it in the future.** This special company, this church of overcomers, will stand up to the Anti-Christ in the days of the Tribulation and bear His testimony upon the earth. They will overcome Satan by their testimony, as we read in *Revelation* Chapter 12:

Revelation 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

Revelation 12:11 (Amplified) And they have overcome (conquered) him by means of the blood of the Lamb and by the utterance of their testimony, for they did not love and cling to life even when faced with death [holding their lives cheap till they had to die for their witnessing].



They loved not their lives unto death. This is the elite force especially chosen by the Lord. They are a company of believers who have personally chosen the Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord and their Master. They will refuse to bow down to the mark of the Beast. (Please read the book *Mark of the Lord and Mark of the Beast*). They will refuse to bow to the music that is being played as in the book of Daniel. When the 'music' was played and everyone bowed down to the great image, three young men stood up erect without any fear. They were strong in their convictions and determined in their hearts. **The opinion and decision of majority did not bother them. The convictions in their hearts withstood the pressure brought by the opinion and decisions of others! They were easily marked out for persecution by the enemy.** Notwithstanding, God knows how to keep His elect! Yet the tribulation and suffering is a reality. So shall it be in these end- times, saints. It is great privilege to be part of such a company, and that is my prayer.

The majority of the church world will succumb to every kind of temptation to compromise; they will agree to every authority that brings pressure upon them to turn away from the Truth; and they will take every easy way out of suffering and tribulation. That is where God calls us to be faithful to the Lord. We need to be faithful in every small area of our daily lives. Saints, we cannot feed the self with worldly counsels any longer; we cannot allow self desires to dominate our lives. If we want to be a part of this calling we must say 'no' to the self. It is time we took this word seriously. You have to be faithful to the Lord in your family life, in your social circles, in the offices, in your church and wherever else you are. It is not a matter of doing things only when

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others watch us. The natural tendency is to show others the good side of your life; but that will not help you in the day of your trial. All that will matter is being faithful to God at all times.

The issue before the elite company of believers is about being faithful to God, and not about our own views and opinions. **It is a matter of our calling which demands faithfulness to the One who has called us. If we would live in this way, the Lord will give us a special supply of grace and life when that day of suffering and tribulation comes upon us. Don't think of that day now, but be faithful in the day when you meet your 'bears and lions,' as David did.** Be faithful to the Word and the Testimony each day of your life. Be uncompromising in your walk and your testimony; be unshakeable to the compulsion, coercion and duress the religious world will bring upon your life. The Lord will give us a special supply of His grace on that day when we are called to face fiery trials. At that difficult time, God will supply you with the needed grace. That is what church history reveals. **Even the weakest ones received an adequate supply of grace because they were faithful; they were not as strong as others, but they were walking that way each day and they were catching up with the strong ones.** Yes, God's grace will flow down even to the youngest among us when the trial comes. Do not think that your youth debars you from His grace. The Lord sees your faithfulness in the few and small things that He has given you. At the time of your trial and test, you will not be left out. All that God would look for is a willingness to be faithful at any cost. If that is your prayer, then His grace will flow into your lives, touch



you and cause you to stand up.

If you have the willingness in your heart to be faithful to God then He will give you the boldness you need. God has chosen the weak, but He also pours His boldness into them at their time of need. Apostle Peter was weak when it came to standing with the Lord (Thrice did he deny the Lord). But he was changed as he opened his life to the Spirit. Peter became a man transformed by His mighty grace. Peter was bold enough to challenge the Jews and said, "The same Jesus whom you crucified, the Father has raised Him, given Him life and made Him Lord." From where did he get such boldness? Peter had denied the Lord earlier, but a day came when he challenged others to believe in the Lord! His life was utterly changed, and the same can happen with you. All these years, you may have closed the doors that God opened unto you, but now you will receive boldness to open those very doors. **If you are willing to be faithful to the Lord, you will receive the boldness and strength that you have lacked hitherto.** See what God will do if you are willing to walk this way and to suffer for His name's sake. **Are you willing to stand for the word and the testimony of Christ? God will pour His boldness into your weak vessel so that He gets all the glory.** This boldness will come upon us if we are willing to go His way of suffering.

THE RICHES OF THE POOR BELIEVERS

Revelation 2:9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy

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of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

The Lord told the church in Smyrna that He knew about their suffering and poverty. **It is interesting to see that the church that walks in the ways of God is normally poor, naturally and physically. The people in the church in Smyrna were far from rich.** God is not concerned about our comfort, but our character. **In churches where people are rich, the hearts seldom turn to the Lord.** Smyrna was a church that was going in the ways of God: they were suffering, and they were also experiencing poverty. This is a fact borne out and established in church history for those who are faithful to the Lord. There is a difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament in this regard.

In the Old Testament, we see that saints like Daniel suffered, but they were also delivered from the jaws of lions. The three Hebrew children in the Old Testament, who suffered because they refused to conform to their masters, were also saved. They were not saved from the fires of persecution, but they were saved from death by God's presence in their midst. In the New Testament, on the other hand, we see that the saints in the church were not delivered from their sufferings; some were torn apart by the lions. The early apostles, and many saints after them, were not saved when they were burnt at the stake by Nero and other Roman emperors. They were not delivered though they greatly suffered at the hands of their persecutors. This is because in their death, the Lord Jesus Christ was glorified. Like their Master, who conquered death, in their death, death was conquered! Praise be to God! There is a tremendous



mystery here, but let this minister life to our inner man.

In the Old Testament the children of Israel were rewarded for their obedience in a natural way by the promise of the inheritance of a land that flowed with milk and honey. They were promised a land that was literal. But when it comes to the New Testament saints, the promise lies not in the literal or natural, but in the spiritual. For them, it was not a matter of the abundance of natural wealth, but of spiritual prosperity. For the saints in the New Testament, the natural gave way to the spiritual. In His New Covenant teachings, the Lord Jesus Christ brought in a kingdom which was not earthly, but heavenly. The disciples, even at the very moment of His ascension to the heavens, asked him a question that had overtones of their natural aspirations. They wanted to know when He would hand over the kingdom to Israel. They were caught up with natural blessings and natural promises. This is because they could not grasp the teachings of Christ which spoke of a kingdom which is heavenly; their understanding was limited to the natural till the Spirit touched them at Pentecost. Let us never overlook that Jesus brought the kingdom of heaven to the earth. Therefore, in the New Covenant, the disciples of the Lord have treasures in heavenly places; their rewards are heavenly, and not natural or earthly.

Today, the Christian world is absorbed in the teaching of prosperity. **They say and teach that to prosper and be richer is a sign of God's blessing.** What a difference from the example of the Lord and the early apostles! **The Lord Himself had no earthly riches, nor were the early apostles rich by any account.** What a contrast! This shows

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us to what extent there has been a deterioration of spiritual values in present Christianity. Believers today are being deceived by such teachers to increase earthly riches, thinking that God wants them to be rich and wealthy. Beloved, this is nothing but a natural response to man's innate desire of covetousness. The example of the Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles is sufficient to clear all doubts on this subject.

The saints in Smyrna were poor, but they were faithful. They were faithful to the Lord in their suffering, even the suffering of poverty. On the other hand, the church in Laodicea was rich; but the Lord told them that they were poor (*Revelation 3:17*). Contrary to this, we see that the Lord told the poor church in Smyrna that they were rich. What a contrast! **The Lord told the church in Smyrna that they were poor; but in the same breath, He said they were rich!** To the church in Laodicea, however, the Lord said, "*Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*" (*Revelation 3:17*).

I know of some believers' families where the husband works in one country while the wife works in another country, thousands of miles apart! Their children are usually sent to boarding schools, while the younger ones are left to the care of loving relations. By and large, the children stand neglected because of their working parents! Could this be the will of God for their lives to be separated for the sake of their fortunes and desires to amass money and riches? It is pathetic that some church leaders encourage such



decisions. Eventually, God's children are found hugging materialism and clinging to their avariciousness. How sad that they are deceived into thinking that the Lord has opened this way and greatly blessed them! The reality is that many are not open for God's word and will for their lives. Very few believers are open to seek the perfect will of God when it comes to such opportunities. And the leaders shy away from speaking the truth and guiding them, because their eyes are upon receiving their tithes! But at what cost is this done? It is so depressing to see this trend among God's own people when it comes to materialism. All they are doing is to run after natural blessings, thereby missing the real spiritual blessings that God has offered them. It is time for us to seriously examine the significance of the blessings that God gives us. If God has blessed us, we have to be very careful to make sure that we are faithful to Him in placing Him above the blessing itself.

We have to remain faithful to the One who has called us in every small aspect of our lives, for God is faithful and wants us to be faithful as well.

James 2:5 (KJV) Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

James 2:5 (Amplified) Listen, my beloved brethren: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and in their position as believers and to inherit the kingdom which He has promised to those who love Him?

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This is the pure word of God. He has promised riches to those that love Him. He makes no mistake in choosing the poor that they may become rich in Christ. Paul says the same thing:

1Corinthians 1:27,28

But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

This is God's promise. He will make the poor rich. So let us not get caught up in any kind of a rat-race to be richer than the man next door. God is faithful and we can trust the Lord to meet all our needs (*Philippians 4:19*). The Lord tells us "*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*" (*Matthew 6:33*). We are to seek the kingdom of God, first and foremost, and then all things would be added to us. Many are seeking the Lord today so that they may get 'all these things'. They are more mindful of the things they will get. **Most believers today are looking back to what things are being added, rather than focusing on His kingdom and His righteousness.** They want to know what has been 'added' to them. That is the kind of Christianity we have! **God might not make us as rich as our neighbours, relatives and friends, but He will certainly not leave us without**



meeting our needs. We may not become wealthy but we shall not be paupers.

I have seen many sincere believers walk circumspectly before God in the beginning of their Christian calling; but after some years, their focus gets shifted. Soon they begin to pursue their longing for wealth and prosperity. They begin to seek to be successful, according to the standards of men, and eventually they make a shipwreck of their lives. We should never forget God's promise to give us heavenly riches in Christ Jesus. We need to treasure that which is 'heavenly', rather than that which is natural. He will make us rich in His time; His richness is beyond comparison. May God open our minds to this reality! History reveals the same. **Many Christians who became rich and wealthy turned out to be unfaithful when their faith was tested. They failed in the test and remained spiritually impoverished. They failed to lay up treasures in heaven!** May we underline the fact that in the New Covenant the Lord has not promised to make us rich in the natural! His promises are spiritual and heavenly; they are not natural and physical.

To the church in Smyrna, God did not say, "You are so poor; but I will pray for you so that you may become rich and others will know God is with you." No. Rather, He said that they were rich. In their poor state naturally, they were already rich spiritually in His eyes! That is important, saints. We must desire to possess the riches that the church in Smyrna had. They were faithful in the little they had. And they sought Him in the little they had. We must not be hindered in our spiritual progress by

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these material things. And let those who have received natural blessings from the Lord be faithful to God in that which He has blessed them with. Are you faithful to the Lord in what you have received? In your trials, endeavour to prove to be faithful. **It is in your faithfulness to the Lord that you shall receive spiritual riches.**

THE SYNAGOGUE OF BLASPHEMERS!

The third thing we see in *Revelation 2:9* concerns blasphemy.

Revelation 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.

Revelation 2:9 (Amplified) I know your affliction and distress and pressing trouble and your poverty—but you are rich! and how you are abused and reviled and slandered by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

Slander, accusation, defamation, abuse, and maltreatment are things God's true children will have to face from time to time. So when you are scorned, reviled, despised and detested you are not to sit down and cry. There will always be some who will speak against you, who will not like you or your ways, who will indulge in hurtful slander, insult and censure. We are to get accustomed to such treatment and behaviour from others. You should not feel



rejected or dejected and be given to the self-pity of the flesh. This must be expected; it is the mark of His house. **If you have never been subjected to slander and abuse and hatred for your life in Christ, then your experience is abnormal.** If you are the black sheep of your family because of your faith in Christ and your obedience to the truth, do not be disheartened. This is quite normal; it is a part of our calling in Christ. Peter says in his first epistle, *“Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.”* (1 Peter 4:15-16). You cannot avoid such unpleasant reactions from others if you want to follow Christ wholeheartedly.

The expression, “. . . those who say they are Jews and are not” refers to those who are not really God’s people, but are of “the synagogue of Satan.” It talks of the kind of religious people who study to have a deep head-knowledge of the Bible from cover to cover, but they remain hypocrites and charlatans. The Lord says they belong to “the synagogue of Satan” because they are not genuine followers of the Lord. They are people who are out to slander, revile, and abuse the true children of God. They gather in their ‘synagogues’ to plan and arrange or chart out ways to defame God’s elect. In the days of old, there were some synagogues that were zealous towards God and taught according to the proper manner of the law of the fathers; but in time they turned against Christians and began to revile them publicly. They started in line with God’s word, having good intentions; but then they were reduced to a synagogue of Satan when they began to despise and berate the true disciples of Christ!

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They besmirched and degraded the Christians and the Spirit of God categorized them as being synagogues of Satan!

In a similar manner, there are many churches that began well, having the mind of God, aspiring to become the true Bride of Christ; but in time they degenerated into becoming an apostate, harlot church. That is a sad reality. **Today, the greatest amount of opposition to a true disciple doesn't come from the heathen; it comes from those who call themselves Christians, but are not Christians in the true sense of the word.** Beloved, let me warn you that a time is coming when there will be a great divide in Christendom. Even some believers will misunderstand the stand taken by true disciples of Christ in these last days. **Today, you and I may be spoken of as unloving and un-Christ-like, while we speak the truth and stand separated for the Lord in the midst of a compromising spiritual world.** Our detractors will insist that the elect and true followers are really not speaking the language of Christ, that they are not showing tolerance and love towards others, that they have become extremists, and so on. But let us not forget that a time came when Jesus rebuked Peter and said, "*Get thee behind me Satan.*" Why did He say this? Jesus said it because Peter had opened the door of his life for Satan to enter in! Jesus rebuked that attitude in Peter in the strongest words. The Lord would not accept something that was contrary to the Father's will, even though it meant being intolerant and unloving. The same Lord told the church in Smyrna that there were some who had a religious covering outwardly, but inwardly they belonged to "the synagogue of Satan." **They had drifted away from their true calling and opened their inward**



lives to the enemy of Christ. The Lord will have no lesser word of correction, but even a stronger word against the apostate church in these last days that has drifted into every deception and compromise. Beloved saints, there is a 'synagogue of Satan' in the midst of much of Christendom. It is good for us to be aware of this reality. The Gospel of John has this to say,

John 16:2,3,4

2 They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

3 And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them.

4 And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.

These Scriptures have proved to be true in history. This was fulfilled in the days of the twelve disciples of the Lord, in the book of Acts. This is true in the history of the church. And this shall also be true in the coming days. God is speaking these words to prepare our lives in these days. The Lord told the church in Smyrna what the synagogue of Satan would do to the faithful disciples. And if you look into the history of the church, you cannot fail to see that **a time came when the ones who were persecuted when they stood by the truth, became the persecutors of their**

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brethren when they fell away from the reality of God's word. The persecuted became the persecutors! This is a reality that exists even today. **Those who drift away from the truth, from the reality of His word, from the church of Christ, and turn to the agreement of man-made groups and organizations, do not hesitate to persecute, revile, blaspheme and slander the true disciples of Christ, who only want to move on to all that God has for man in Christ Jesus.** Is this not what some of us are going through at present? Certainly, the prophetic word of the Lord in the Gospel of Matthew, will come to pass, *"And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another."* (Matthew 24:10) In the days to come, the hatred of the persecutors will rise to great heights; the apostate church, Babylon, and the Anti-Christ will become one. The time is not far when this will happen.

God's true remnant saints are not to be discouraged when others slander and speak ill of us. Look at what kind of slander Jesus faced in His time! He was called a variety of bad names—such as false teacher, blasphemer, lunatic, demon-possessed man, Beelzebub! Let us thank God that He has hidden His things from the wise and the prudent of the world, but He has chosen the despised, the weak and the base things of the world.

The Lord told the church in Smyrna that they would have tribulation for ten days. 'Ten' being the number of trials and temptations, shows that the church in Smyrna would experience tribulation in full measure. The Lord told them that He knew about their tribulation, but there



was more is to come! How do you like that? Praise God! The Lord did not make it easy for the believers who have been faithful. Some would be cast into prison by Satan, but that was not to be the end of their suffering; more would follow. Can you imagine going through the fullness of suffering for Christ?

Revelation 2:10,11

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.

We are to be encouraged that God has warned His people well in advance to walk humbly before the Lord. These are not days to persue our natural appetites and self-interests. We are to be bold in holding on to the truth, whatever we may have to go through for His testimony.

The Lord says, "Do not fear." The One who is ' the First and the Last' says, "Fear not." The One 'who was dead but is alive' says, "Fear not". Even if your father, mother, close friends, colleagues, or even the whole world turn against you, "Fear none of these things." **The spirit of fear is gripping the whole world in these last days, but the Lord's word for His people is not to fear anything.** In

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the midst of persecution, slander, rumour- mongering, blame games and a variety of deceptive techniques of the enemy, the word of the Lord is to cast fear out of our minds. When others threaten to beat you, disown you, reject and renounce you, fear not. The Lord has warned us in His words. To His remnant people He says, "Fear not." Beloved, believe in His word and say, " Amen".





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chapter three

HOLDING FAST - WITHOUT FEAR



WRITE WHAT THOU HEAREST

The Holy Spirit is bringing many important counsels to God's remnant in these last days. His word is helping God's children to overcome things that have been difficult to overcome in the past. The challenges are many, so also the battles; and it is His word that keeps them going on as overcomers. The thoughts that I wish to share may sound simple and elementary, but they are very important for true disciples of the Lord.

Revelation 1:10,11

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

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11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

Here the Lord says to John "write what you are hearing". John was commanded to write what he was hearing from the Lord. In the course of events taking place, he would have forgotten what he would have heard and hence the Lord told him to write them down. The Lord reminds me how important it is to write what we hear from Him! The Spirit tells us that we are to write what we hear, so that we can turn to them another time.

Amongst God's people, I have observed that when they hear messages, many of them only make a note of the references to Scripture. Thus, if a preacher makes a mention of only two Scripture portions in his message, then that is all that is written down by them. In their notes they make no mention of the context in which the Scripture references were given. They make no record of what the Spirit has spoken specifically to their hearts in connection with the message and Scriptures. It is very sad that some people open their notebooks to write the message, but all they manage to make a note amounts to a badly drawn caricature of the preacher, some scribbling, some doodling and some tomfoolery. The preacher has no idea what they are writing; all he sees is that people have their notebooks out, their pens in hand, and that they are vigorously scribbling something. The practice in most groups is to



carry a notebook with their Bibles when they attend any gathering; but no one really knows what the notebooks contain. The question is whether they can get something that would minister to their spirit when they turn to read their notebooks again.

Apostle John was diligent to write down every spoken word that he heard. It is a matter of great joy that today, two thousand years later, we can turn to that Scripture which John wrote at that time in obedience to the Spirit. Let us review what we do when we hear a message. We need to realize that the Lord speaks seriously to us concerning our spiritual lives, and therefore, we need to take careful heed to whatever is spoken. And not only that, we need to be able to refer to it again and again, to recapitulate all that the Spirit has spoken to us specifically on past occasions. Your notes will minister to your heart even twenty years later!

It is sad that some brethren neglect to write what they hear, because they think that they can hear a CD or cassette of the message whenever they want to. Nevertheless, it is important to write as the Spirit ministers to us personally so that we can refer to the ministrations of the Spirit at a later date. A habit of writing down important things we hear from the word of the Lord will help us to build our lives. The words will minister afresh to our inner man even after a lapse of many years. Furthermore, they can even be a source to minister to others when the need arises. This has been the experience of my own life.

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SEEING CHRIST AS OUR JUDGE

Revelation 1:17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

In verses 12 to 17 of *Revelation* Chapter 1, we see an unveiling of Christ to Apostle John. John fell as dead at His feet. As this was not the first time that John met with the Lord, the question arises as to why John fell at the Lord's feet this time. John had been with the Lord and in the ministry for 65 long years. He had lived physically as a disciple of the Master for three and a half years. He ate with Him, walked with Him, ministered to Him, and even saw the Lord transfigured on the Mount. He saw Christ in His resurrection body. He was there when Christ ascended to the heavens in His resurrection glory. **But in none of these places do we see John falling as dead before the Lord!** So why did John fall at the feet of the risen Lord at this instance? This was the same John who had leaned on the Master's breast at the Last Supper, the same John who had been so close to His heart, the same John years later fell at His feet as dead! He was undoubtedly the saintliest man on earth at that time. Yet he could not stand up in the presence of the same Master! **The reason why John fell before Him as dead was because the Lord was revealing Himself as the Judge over all things!**

In *Revelation* 1, we find the Lord as a Judge over all things. When He comes to judge, He is totally a different person in His manifestation. When John saw the Lord as



Judge in the midst of His church, the same John could not help but fall at the feet of the same Man! In the book of *Acts* we read, *"Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained..."* (Acts 17:31).

John had met the Lord as a friend, a brother, a savior, a master, a miracle doer, and as the resurrected Lord. And on none of those occasions did John fall at His feet. However, when he met the Lord as the Judge, he could not stand before the Judge Jesus Christ on the basis of his past acquaintance and familiarity. May God open your eyes to see the truth! **Saints, you may know the Lord as your Saviour, friend, miracle doer, sustainer, healer etc., but it is totally a different thing to meet Him as the Judge of all things!**

Many people casually say that on that day, when they meet the Lord, they will just ask the Lord whatever would be on their mind and tell Him this or that, as friends do! Saints, it is going to be a completely different matter when you meet with the Lord as the Judge. You will have no words to speak! On that day, no one will be able to just stand before Him. No, it is not going to be a pleasant day; it is not going to be a day where we shall be able to talk to Him in a friendly way. He is a Judge over all things; and our eyes need to be opened to the fact that when He stands as Judge, no one dare stand erect before Him.

Those who truly know the Lord most will revere Him the most; they will revere Him in their heart to a greater degree than any one else. History shows that

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the men who knew the Lord intimately, were also the ones who revered Him exceedingly in their lives. **And those who have known Him the least, always pretend to have a kind of cheap intimacy and familiarity with Him.** Today many talk about Christ as if He is a close friend (like a 'yar', 'dost', buddy or pal), but there is no real reverence for Him, no fear and no worshipful adoration in them. In modesty and humility, the seraphim in heaven cover their face before the Lord of Hosts (*Isaiah 6:2*). Job said, "*I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee*" (*Job 42:5*). Job came to a place of true adoration.

It is commonly said that "*Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.*" Carnal believers today go in where angels fear even to walk! Many come to the house of God with no respect, no fear, no awe and no dread. The way they behave and react in the house of God shows that they have no reverence for the Lord in His house. Such is the folly of the carnal believers! Yet, they would not dare to be irreverent in the presence of important dignitaries of this world. Some of them behave in the house of God as they would not dare to behave in a public place! But we see how they enter into God's house and do things there that they would never do in any other place. The more we truly know the Lord, the more we will fall at His feet in adoration and in true surrender. Then we shall seek His face with all sincerity and readily fall at His feet in humble adoration and worship. Only when we are found to be in such a state we see our true spiritual condition. That will reveal our un-Christ-likeness, what we are made of within, and how much our lives are different from His. Then we shall experience the touch that Job experienced. Right there on the Isle of



Patmos John experienced this touch of the Lord. That is what happened to Isaiah and to Job as well. **Only when we begin to behold Him, shall we be able to see the condition of our own lives and how un-Christ-like we are in our lives.** It is then and only then, shall we stop judging other and start judging ourselves, stop examining others and start examining our selves.

When we begin to examine our lives with the help of the Spirit, we will see what we are made of within. Then we shall receive that touch from the Lord that John received in his life at the Isle of Patmos. It is tremendous to experience that! Can you picture a man who, having been used of God for many years, one day sees this God of glory standing in all His radiance before him as a Judge on the throne of God? He received a fresh touch from God when he saw this great Judge before his very eyes. And when he saw this God and His glory, then he saw himself as he truly was and fell at His feet in abject humility and brokenness. Then, at last, he saw what the state of his own life was. When he experienced the touch of the Lord, he fell at His feet and was able to examine the sordid state of his life.

Many times we miss that touch of the Lord because we are so caught up with judging others. We have no time to be open before the Lord . However, when we behold Him, we shall also be able to confess as Isaiah, Job and Paul confessed, and say, "O wretched man that I am!" Then shall we receive the touch of the Lord. He will say, "Fear not", and cause us to stand up. Beloved, it is a tremendous thing to receive the touch of the Lord in one's life. **Here was a man of 95, with 65 years of ministry and**

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one who had the closest relationship with the living Lord, and yet he needed a fresh touch of the Divine in his life. He was the saintliest man on the earth at that time, yet he could not stand before the Lord; because He was the Lord of all things and Judge over all things! How much more we need a touch from Him. Oh yes, I need such a ministrations in my own life so much.

Some men in ministry think that the Lord does all things for them, as far as the Lord's work is concerned, because they have several decades of ministry to their credit. Having come to a stage where they have all but retired from the work of the Lord, leaving their ministry to their sons and grandsons to inherit, they think that they have it all. **What a challenge to see a man who at the ripe age of 95, after 65 years of a ministry suffering for the testimony of the Lord, being touched by the Lord afresh for the work of the Lord!** I am humbled and challenged in my being for this work of the Lord in my life.

THE FIRST AND THE LAST

Revelation 1:9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 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.

The expression, "These things saith the first and the last", is used many times in the first two chapters of the Book of Revelation. There is a reason why the Lord said so, as we shall soon see. The Lord had nothing against the church in Smyrna, and said that he knew their works and their tribulation and poverty. The Lord said that He knew the blasphemy of them who said they were Jews, but were not, but were of "the synagogue of Satan". The Lord further told them, "Fear none of these things." **He says, "You shall suffer, but fear not." We are not to be fearful of blasphemy, not to be fearful of reproaches, and not to be fearful of the things that will come upon His true bride in these last days.** Let us encourage ourselves with what the Lord said to His disciples in *Matthew* 10: 16-19,

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Matthew 10:16-19

16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

17 But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;

18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.

Some preachers err by misinterpreting these Scriptures. They say that we don't have to study or meditate on God's word to preach; but when we stand up to preach the Word, God will provide the right words to speak. However, this is not what the Scriptures say. What the Lord says is that when one stands before governors and kings, the Lord will then give the right words to speak to them. But when we have to stand before God's people and minister to them, it would be better to first sit down before the Lord and receive something from Him for His people! There is a need to be tuned to the Lord. This is very necessary for spiritual life to flow forth from the things that are preached. You need to hear the Lord and meet the Lord before you can speak His words to others. Let there first be



obedience, submission and humility before the Lord. Then when we are brought before the authorities of this world, the Lord will embolden us and give us words in that day.

When there is the right obedience, the Lord will give us boldness:

Matthew 10:20-28

20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.

22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.

24 The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.

25 It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?

26 Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered,

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that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.

27 What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.

28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Notice very carefully that the Lord always says, "Fear not," whenever there is mention of suffering and tribulation to His people,

Matthew 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

I once heard a preacher say that in those days a sparrow could be bought for one farthing. The second sparrow was given for free. Even the second sparrow that was not paid for would not fall to the ground without the Father's word. In this parable, the Lord says that though only one sparrow had been paid and asked for, a second sparrow will be given for free, and this too shall avail of the Father's care and not fall to the ground. I heard this many years ago, as a young believer at an evangelical meeting, when the Lord ministered a great deal to my heart. God knows everything that is happening to us. And the Lord says again in verse 31, "Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." Notice that the Lord says, "Fear not," again! I



want to encourage the saints who go through many difficulties in their lives. The Lord has made it clear that when we are rejected, slandered and misunderstood for His name's sake, we are not to fear anything. Saints, you will be hounded as evildoers by people, spoken of as the black sheep of the family, and suffer many more things, but the word of the Lord is "FEAR NOT". We need to take this word into our hearts. Saints, we must be established in this truth.

1Peter 2:12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

1Peter 2:12 (Amplified) Conduct yourselves properly (honorably, righteously) among the Gentiles, so that, although they may slander you as evildoers, [yet] they may by witnessing your good deeds [come to] glorify God in the day of inspection [when God shall look upon you wanderers as a pastor or shepherd looks over his flock].

When people slander you and reproach you, how should we behave as His children and for His name's sake? The challenge for us is to show forth our good works. It is clear how the Lord wants us to conduct ourselves. We have to be careful how we proceed for His sake.

The Lord Says, "Fear Not..."

Isaiah 54:17 But no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against

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you in judgment you shall show to be in the wrong. This [peace, righteousness, security, triumph over opposition] is the heritage of the servants of the Lord [those in whom the ideal Servant of the Lord is reproduced]; this is the righteousness or the vindication which they obtain from Me [this is that which I impart to them as their justification], says the Lord.

Our vindication is from the Lord. We are not to fear the slander, the reproaches and the evaluations of others. We need to be strong in our inner man. The Lord will vindicate us at the right time. Till that time comes, we need to be patient with the Lord. **We need to be partakers of the kingdom of His patience.** We need to be quiet and wait on God till our vindication comes from God despite what ungodly people may say about us. Listen to what Peter says,

1 Peter 4:14-16

14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.

16 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.



We are not to be bothered by what many carnal believers say, but we have to consecrate ourselves to the Lord and follow Him. And in the same way as the Lord says to the church in Smyrna, let us also say, "Fear not their revilings, fear not their reproaches, their lies, and fear not their threatenings!"

In His earthly ministry, the Scriptures make it amply clear that the Lord laid great emphasis upon not fearing what others would do to us. He said to His disciples repeatedly, "Do not fear, do not fear!" **Saints, remember that whenever the Lord talked to His disciples about the persecutions, trials and sufferings that were to come upon them, He always told them to 'fear not!'** Even in the Book of Revelation, the Lord says the same thing to the churches. He said, "*Fear none of these things which thou shalt suffer*". In other words, the Lord told them that they had faced many sufferings and had to go through many more, but they were not to fear any of those things. The Lord also said these words again and again to His disciples. Saints, we also need to hear this Word again and again. This is because fear has gripped humankind from the very beginning of creation, from the time that man was separated from God in the Garden. When man sinned against God, he hid in fear from God; and ever since then man has always been gripped by fear, not only of God, but of everything. Fear is ruling man in a very negative way. We see today that fear is gripping the whole world.

Luke 21:25,26

25 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon,

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and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;

26 Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

How true this is today! See the Amplified Bible:

Luke 21:25,26

25 And there will be signs in the sun and moon and stars; and upon the earth [there will be] distress (trouble and anguish) of nations in bewilderment and perplexity [without resources, left wanting, embarrassed, in doubt, not knowing which way to turn] at the roaring (the echo) of the tossing of the sea, [Isa. 13:10; Joel 2:10; Zeph. 1:15.]

26 Men swooning away or expiring with fear and dread and apprehension and expectation of the things that are coming on the world; for the [very] powers of the heavens will be shaken and caused to totter.

Man's calculations are going awry. I am not a prophet or a prophet's son, but during one of my visits to the United States, when I was ministering God's word in a gathering, I quoted this Scripture and spoke about how God would bring about a financial earthquake or shaking in the world. The economy would be shaken and men would be gripped by tremendous fears. Everywhere man's calculations and plans are turning out to be erroneous and they will go wide off



the mark. There will be perplexities and confusion and bewilderment. Man will be left wanting, left without resources, not knowing which way to turn. Man's wisdom will certainly come to an end. **Beloved saints, man can only make things from what is available. Only God can make things out of nothing, bringing things into existence that did not exist.** Paul says in *Romans*, "...even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." (*Romans* 4:17). **O man, you are a created being and do not boast of your abilities! The days are approaching when all that man has upon his heart will be brought to naught.** The spirit of fear will come upon the earth, as Jesus told His disciples. We can't say what our tomorrows will be like. There is uncertainty everywhere. People who had left India to make a fortune in their professions, are now returning with nothing in their hands. The spirit of fear is gripping every man, but we must learn to trust the Lord and not trust our jobs, our bank balances, our professions or our investments. **Trust not in these, but trust in the Lord.** The spirit of fear is driving men to take extreme steps. Many believers are enslaved by the fear of what will happen in the future. But the Lord is saying to His own to have no fear about the future nor of sickness, of death, or fear of any kind of thing. **Fear is one of Satan's master weapons; he enslaves many believers through fear. Fear has many appearances, faces, tones and colors.** The spirit of fear is coming upon the world as never before. We cannot trust in anything we have, be it our profession, our bank balances, our health, our abilities, or anything else; but our only trust must be on the Lord.

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It is fear that inhibits many believers from witnessing wherever the Lord has kept them. People fear to talk about the Lord and share the Word because of the fear of what people would think of them or do to them. Who put that fear in them? God's people hold back many times and are not able to speak or do whatever the Lord wants them to do. We are not to be enslaved by the wiles of the enemy who brings fear within us. These are days when we must trust and believe God. As His overcomers, we must place our whole trust in Him in every small thing we come across here and there. These are the days of our preparations.

Many believers confuse timidity with humility. It is Satan who deceives many people. **Many are timid, but they think that they are humble. Where there is timidity, there is also fear. But humility does not have any fear attached with it.** We need to be people who come out of our timidity. We are to be humble, but not timid. It was fear that prevented Peter from testifying about Jesus Christ before the servant girl in the High Priest's palace. He had said a few hours earlier that he would die for Jesus even if everyone else would leave Him. Though he looked bold, there was a fear that lurked deep within him. Many times we are like Peter. Behind the pulpit or in a gathering, we may appear to be strong and fearless; but actually it is only the grace of God that enables us to overcome fears and stand before others in situations. Each one of us must seek the Lord to be changed. **We are not to be enslaved by fear that silences us and prevents us from glorifying the Lord.** Fear silences us, so that instead of being a witness and testimony for the Lord wherever He has kept us, we are cowed down, intimidated and frightened though we may



not show it. May the Lord deliver each one of us from the enemy's clutches.

After Pentecost, something happened to Peter and his fears were driven away. When he was baptized in the Holy Spirit, the same man who was fearful and abject in his demeanor, suddenly became bold and courageous. In *Acts 2*, we see the great boldness to which the disciples came in. And again in *Acts 4*, we read of how they were filled with the Holy Ghost: "*And they spake the word of God with boldness.*" The power of the Spirit and the speaking of the Word go hand in hand.

Acts 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

When the people prayed, the place was shaken. But today people shake when they pray! What a difference! When they gathered, the place was shaken; and they were empowered by the Spirit to speak the Word. The reality is that when we are open to the ministration of the Spirit, He ministers the love of God into us and takes away the spirit of fear. There is a fresh input of His love. So affirms the Scripture, "*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*" (1 John 4:18)

Let me encourage the saints by saying that God does not want you to be enslaved by the spirit of fear. That would prevent you from opening your mouth and being a witness

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and testimony for the Lord among your friends and relatives and in the place of your work. He wants to fill us with the power of His Spirit and make us whole. Then with the fresh input of His word, we are emboldened within.

In these days, God's word has been strengthening me physically, mentally and spiritually. I have my own battles and there are so many things in ministry, but God's word and the fresh ministration of the Spirit drives away any discouragement and opposition. It gives me fresh boldness and strength to meet every challenge. We need to acknowledge our present condition to the Lord and say, "Lord, I am a coward; I am afraid and I need Your help. I forgot the day when I opened my mouth and witnessed You." Tell Him how you are and that you need His help. "Lord, many times You gave me opportunities to speak up; but I never opened my mouth because of fear. Lord, forgive me. I turn to You now." If you say this to the Lord, He will help you because He does not want you to be enslaved by the spirit of fear in any way. The spirit of fear can move from one area of our lives to another with great ease, and hence we must be very watchful. In the spirit of fear for the future, we speculate unnecessarily and wonder, "What will happen if this happens? What will happen if that happens?" It is true that the enemy enslaves us to the spirit of fear, and then brings fears in different areas of our lives, jumping from one thing to another with ease. Yes, and in that small area of your life where there is fear, it is good to own up to the Lord and say, "Lord, I am fearful of my future. I am fearful of my sickness. I am fearful of this and that... but Lord I want to trust in Your love." **The enemy knows those who are fearful, and he makes them even more fearful.** The Lord



can deliver you, as He has delivered me. We need to accept that we are full of fears in some specific weak areas. The promise of God is, *"They which do hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled"* (Matthew 5:6). So it is a matter of your hunger being filled by His love! Saints, we shall come across many situations in which fear may grip us; but we have to overcome fear and obtain victory. Let this word come into your life as a fresh ministration of the Spirit. When we confess our fears to the Lord, then the Lord will make a way for us and we shall also be emboldened in that area in which we fear many things. **The Lord says, "Fear not," many times, because He knows that that is the main weapon of the enemy against us.** So we need to take every opportunity to open our hearts to the Lord. And as we open our hearts to Him, for His word, for His purpose, and for His testimony, we shall be released from every kind of fear that enslaves us. Hallelujah!



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chapter four

HOLDING FAST - AGAINST THE ADVERSARY



SATAN'S LIMITATIONS

Revelation 2:8-10

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

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days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

The Lord told the church in Smyrna not to fear any of the things that they would suffer. The expression, "...which thou shalt suffer," means that the Lord knew what they would suffer in the days ahead. God knew that they would suffer yet more than they had in the past. There is tremendous peace when we know that the Lord knows what we are going to suffer. Praise the Lord! The Lord says, "Fear not," and then immediately adds, ". . . that thou shalt suffer," because He knows what they would suffer. One Bible translation says, "...which you are about to suffer". In other words, **the Lord told them that they would have to suffer to do His will.** We must be ready to suffer to do His will according to His purpose for us. In the light of this statement or declaration, it is clear that **we should be ready to suffer according to His will and plan for us. God does not protect His faithful children from suffering,** but He allows them to suffer according to His plan. God knew that the church was already suffering; even so, He told them that they would have to suffer yet more. God knew that it was necessary for them to suffer so that they could be brought to the full spiritual heights He intended for them, which is always His ultimate end. All things work together for that good, which is to be conformed to Christ! **And so Smyrna, the suffering church, was not spared the suffering that they had to undergo, to reach greater spiritual heights.** This is something we have to learn because often the mentality of the average believer is to avoid suffering.



We need to accept, understand and know that suffering is essential for our spiritual progression. How careful we have to be not to mess up our lives by doing our own will. Those who desire to live by the lordship of Christ must walk with extreme care here. **The lordship of Christ is a realm where the Lord initiates all things in our lives. To live in this realm, our only desire must be to stand for His testimony; our only will must be to do His will. It is in this realm that all things will work toward the good of conforming us into the image of Christ when we suffer and go through extreme hardships. This is the place where Satan is limited and cannot do anything without God's permission.** Let us be reminded of this!

Satan, and all those who hate us, may desire to trouble us in many ways, but they *cannot* get at us without God's approval. Even in the Old Testament, **Satan realized that God had put a hedge around Job, so that no evil could touch him.** Satan told God, *"Hast Thou not made a hedge about Job and his house and all that he has, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land."*(Job 1:10). For the purpose of Job's sanctification, God allowed the 'hedge' to be opened so that Satan could attack him. However, **the extent to which the hedge was opened for Satan was determined by God.** Initially, the Lord opened the hedge just a little bit. Later on, the gap in the hedge protecting Job was widened further for Satan to enter in (refer to Job Chapters 1 & 2). The Sabeans and the Chaldeans who stole Job's property had entered through the opening that God had made in that hedge! *"The Sabeans attacked and took them. They also slew the servants with the edge of the sword... The Chaldeans*

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formed three bands and made a raid on the camels and took them and slew the servants with the edge of the sword.”(Job 1:15,17).

The storm that blew the house down upon Job’s children was also the result of the Lord opening the hedge a tad more. The opening, however, was not wide enough for diseases and sicknesses to come and attack Job’s body. However, later on, when God opened up the hedge a little more, diseases found a way to enter in through the gap that had become wider and this caused Job to be severely afflicted. **Job didn’t realize that God was in control of everything that was going on.** He realized this much later at the end of the story. However, we can’t blame him, for he did not have the written Scriptures readily available, as we have today. How blessed a people we are to have the Word of God that shows us that God controls the opening in every hedge. The hedge is actually God Himself, who is as a wall of fire around us. *“For I, says the Lord, will be to her a wall of fire around about, and I will be the glory in midst of her.” (Zechariah 2:5 Amplified).*

GOD’S PLAN FOR JOSEPH

I am reminded of the example of Joseph in the Old Testament. The case of Joseph is a classic example for all of us. God had a plan for Joseph, the eleventh son of Jacob, to be the second ruler in Egypt at the age of thirty. Joseph was a God-fearing lad, and therefore he was hated by Satan. Satan instigated Joseph’s elder brothers to get rid of him. But God made sure that they didn’t take Joseph’s life. They



managed, however, to sell him off to the Ishmaelite traders. And where do you think those traders took Joseph? They took Joseph to Egypt, of course! That was the **first step** in the fulfillment of God's plan for Joseph!

In Egypt, Joseph was bought as a slave by Potiphar. This also was arranged by God. Potiphar's wife, who was an evil woman, took a liking to Joseph and tried to entice him time and time again. Finally, when she found that Joseph would not accede to her evil schemes, she falsely accused Joseph and had him thrown into jail. But whom did Joseph meet in the jail? He met the Pharaoh's cupbearer! **God had arranged for the Pharaoh's cupbearer to be jailed at the same time so that Joseph could meet him.** That was the **second step** in God's plan for Joseph.

God's **third step** was to allow Pharaoh's cupbearer to forget about Joseph for two years. *"The chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him. It happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had a dream... Then the chief cupbearer spoke to Pharaoh...(Genesis 40:23; 41:1,9).* **That was the appointed time, according to God's time-table, for Joseph to be released from prison.** *Psalm 105:19, 20 says, "Until the time that His word came to pass, the word of the Lord tested him. Then the king sent and released him and set him free."* **At that point of time, Joseph was 30 years old. God's time had come.** And so God gave Pharaoh a dream. **And God also reminded the cupbearer that Joseph could interpret dreams. How great is our God! He never forgets! His delays are never His denials.** Thus Joseph came before Pharaoh at the age of thirty and became the second ruler of Egypt. **Saints, God's timing**

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of events in the life of Joseph could not have been more precise and perfect!

Dearly beloved, I am very sure that I could never have thought of arranging things the way God did in Joseph's life. If you and I had the power to plan Joseph's life, we would probably have prevented people from doing him harm; but the way God worked it all out was far better. **It's a far greater miracle when the evil that people do to us is turned around to fulfill God's purposes in our lives! God takes great delight in turning the tables on Satan, so that all things work together for the good of conforming us to the likeness of His Son!**

What should our attitude be to those who do evil to us, to those who persecute us, to those who speak lies about us, to brothers who are jealous of us, and to those who accuse us falsely? **We should believe that the sovereignty of God is great enough to use all these people and everything they do whether done deliberately or accidentally to work together for the fulfillment of His purpose in our lives!** If God did that for Joseph, won't He do it for us too? He certainly can do, and He most surely will do so in our lives.

There was only one person who could have messed up God's plan for Joseph's life. Only one person and that was *Joseph himself*. If he had yielded to the enticements and temptations of Potiphar's wife, he would certainly have been set aside by God. **I am deeply convinced that there is only one person in the universe who can spoil and frustrate God's plan for your life;**



and that is you yourself. No one else can do it. Neither your friends, nor your enemies, nor angels, and not even Satan, can mess up God's plan for you. Only you can! It is my prayer that God may open your eyes as He has opened mine in some measure in this regard. Beloved, once you see this, it will liberate you from many of your fears. It also has the potential to deliver you from all the wrong attitudes you may have towards those who harm you.

GOD IS IN CONTROL

Revelation 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.

The Lord says to the church in Smyrna, "*behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried*". **We may be thrown into prison, but it is only a trial.** The Lord is saying, "If you are thrown into jail and undergo a severe trial, it is only to fulfill My purpose and My testimony for you." It is so clear that the trials we have to face are for our good. The Lord further implies, "I am working something in your life for your good: *'that ye may be tested and approved and critically appraised'*" (Amplified Bible). And in Paul's life, we know how being thrown in jail turned out to be for his good.

Paul says this in *Philippians 1:12-14*

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"But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."

Paul makes it very clear that though going to jail was a trial for him, it was also so that he could help others in the Lord. The Amplified Version is very stirring and encouraging:

Philippians 1:12,13,14

12 Now I want you to know and continue to rest assured, brethren, that what [has happened] to me [this imprisonment] has actually only served to advance and give a renewed impetus to the [spreading of the] good news (the Gospel).

13 So much is this a fact that throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest [here] my imprisonment has become generally known to be in Christ [that I am a prisoner in His service and for Him].

14 And [also] most of the brethren have derived fresh confidence in the Lord because of my chains and are much more bold to speak and publish fearlessly the Word of God [acting with more freedom and indifference to the consequences].

How tremendous this is? Paul's chains were a trial for



him, but they served a much greater purpose in the Lord. It gave an opportunity to Paul to write his epistles and to fearlessly preach the word of God, so that many others could also preach the Word fearlessly. In like manner, the Lord told the church in Smyrna that their trial was to help others and to sanctify the church. The Lord is able to turn the tables on Satan in such a way that everything would truly work for God's divine purpose.

Beloved, it is the Lord who decides the length of time His people should undergo suffering. We may go through trials, suffering and situations, but it is God who decides the length of the time we are to suffer. It is not in the hands of man, though man may turn around and say, "I have the authority". Jesus told Pilate that he had no authority to decide anything over His life! Jesus said to Pilate, "*Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.*" (John 19:11). **It was the Father's decision that governed everything.** We must lay hold of this truth by the Holy Spirit. It is the Lord who governs things in the lives of those who have given themselves to His lordship! When we go through trials and situations according to His will, when we suffer according to His plan, let us bear in mind that we have no power to change things. **The Lord is in control!**

Matthew 24:22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

The lengthening and shortening of our days are in the

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hands of the Lord! For the sake of the elect, those days will be shortened. It is in the hands of the Lord, for He knows our frame, how much we can endure and He will not go beyond. That is why He says that for the sake of the elect, He will reduce the days of suffering and trials.

Sometimes people get upset with God, for which they have to repent before the Lord. There were times when I went through what seemed to be too great a trial, much more than I could bear; **but I had to cry out to God, repent and beg forgiveness from the Lord when I realized that I had murmured, complained, and lacked patience.** And the moment I repented, I was released into His peace. Beloved, He knows what His elect is going through and He reduces the trials for their sakes.

Genesis 8:1 And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged;

God remembered Noah; He did not forget His elect. It was a time of God's great judgment on the earth. In the midst of His fury, His anger and His judgments, He remembered the righteous Noah. God is not like men who forget many things. We often get caught up with many things and even forget our promises and responsibilities. God is not like that. God remembered Noah in the midst of spewing forth His judgments. For the sake of His elect, He will reduce the days; but let us be willing to suffer for His sake. He will not forget His elect when they are encompassed by great tribulations. However great His



anger may be against sin, rebellion and immorality, He will always remember His saints, His very own.

Isaiah 49:15,16

15 Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.

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

Saints, it is very comforting to hide this Scripture in our heart. He will not try us beyond what we can bear. But we must be willing to suffer according to His plan. In the days to come, when we undergo suffering according to His will and for His name's sake, He will not allow us to be tested beyond our ability. Remember that! **His hands are upon the control knob or switch. He will turn down the pressure we face at the right time.** The enemy has no control over that. **Paul received 39 stripes** (*"Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one"*); **but there and then the Lord pressed the switch, because He knew that if Paul were to receive even one more stripe, he would die!** Historians say that the lashing of 40 stripes were designed to be fatal. **The 40th lash of the whip upon Paul would have been fatal, but the Lord remembered His elect.** How comforting this is! These are the days when the Lord is preparing the bride for the Brideroom; and let us not forget that God has His hand upon the control knob.

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“BE FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH”

See what the Lord says to the church in Smyra: “Be faithful unto death.” In effect, He says, “Your faith will be tried; but if it has to be according to My will, then be willing to die for My name’s sake.” What a word! If we are to die, as die we must, let us be willing to die according to His plan. We may have to do that, saints. It is better to do that and stand true to the Lord on that day. If in His will we are called to die for His name’s sake, we must be found faithful. **It is much better than dying in an accident or dying due to some terrible disease.** It is good to be faithful to what God has willed for us. The majority of believers today easily compromise their lives for just a little gain. **We see how many believers compromise their spiritual lives for some petty gain, in the form of money, promotion, some family benefit, or some natural, earthly desire.** It is here that we have to learn to be uncompromising—in the daily small things of our lives. Many are happy to say that they will stand for the Lord in that day—not now, but in *that* day! **Beloved, if we can stand today, we shall also be able to stand on that day as well.** It is **now** today, at this time that we must be uncompromising in the little benefits, easy ways and docile paths that we come across every day. Many believers are living compromisingly today, but the day is coming when they will not be able to buy and sell without the mark of the Beast. (Please read the book ‘*Mark of the Lord and the Mark of the Beast*’). How terrible a day that will be! Many will accept the ‘mark of the beast’ to survive in that day! **But to be faithful to the Lord is much better than living an easy, compromising**



life for the sake of some small benefit that is temporary and fleeting. Better is 'the crown of life' than all the earthly honour one receives; it is greater than even physical life. It is much more precious.

END PIECE

Revelation 1:11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

Revelation 1:17,18

17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death

May we turn our eyes on the One who says, "I am the First and the Last." He has said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending."

God knows the end from the beginning; and He Himself is before "the beginning" and after "the end".
Amen!

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This is why we must cease from being afraid. We are chosen by the One who is “the First and the Last”. We may not like to tell others, but every one of us has some fears lurking within. How much we are enslaved by the spirit of fear! It is time to turn our eyes upon the One who is “the First and the Last”. What a tremendous thing it is to focus on Him, rather than many other things that can occupy our minds.

Remember that God’s purpose has been set upon your lives. There is a purpose of God that is burning within you. Let us not compare ourselves with others, but let’s be governed by the purpose of God upon our lives and focus on Him who has “the keys of hell and death”.

Keys symbolize closing and opening. The key is with the Lord. Satan lost it a long time ago.

Hebrews 2:15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

The Lord delivers all those who fear for their lives by vanquishing the one who had power over death. He wrested the key from Satan, and today He has the key in His control. His hand is upon the knob that controls our lives. **As His true remnant in these last days, as people who wholly follow the Lord, seeking to do His will alone, we cannot die until God’s appointed time is come.** No accidents or sickness can ever have a claim upon our lives until ... until God decides. Amen!

People who have been enslaved by the fear of death



have been delivered, because He has vanquished him who had power of death. Let this encourage the elect in this day. **John may have been persecuted by the Romans on the Isle of Patmos, but they could not kill him. It was the Father's will to keep John alive in Patmos, until God's time came upon him.**

Imprisoned in the isle, John never thought that he would have some more opportunities to minister the Word of life. But the Father had different plans—He had a ministry for John even though he was 95 years old. He told John to come up to Him; He told him to write down all that He would show him. Today people say they are too old to write down what the Lord has to say. They want to retire and be at ease. The Lord has something more for each of us. He wants us to arise. John arose and he was empowered by the Spirit. God gave him a task when he was about to give up! The Lord has a task for each one of us, as God's elect. God has His finger on the knob; He knows all about you.

Saints, let us turn our eyes upon Him who is "the First and the Last"! Be ye faithful unto death! Fear not, but stand up and give yourselves to Him who has called you, to Him who is faithful, despite everything. He has called us to bear His testimony here and now! Remember, God has something more for you!



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chapter five

HOLDING FAST - IN FAITH AND TRUST



THE REDUCING WORK OF THE SPIRIT

God, in His mercy and loving faithfulness, always ministers His counsels to His people through His precious Word. However, having heard His Word, many of us fail to give ourselves fully to the living of His word in our lives. Beloved, this is a serious matter in the eyes of the Lord.

Many saints do not utilize the Word they have heard to deal with the situations that they face from time to time. In a way, therefore, the Word they have heard does not benefit them as it ought to. They come to God's house to hear His word, but they use it only to satisfy their religious hunger and spiritual poverty. Having heard the Word, they often take it easy and neglect to apply the Word to their lives. The result of this is that they lose the cutting edge of the Word.

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In other words, they treat the things of the Lord in an off-hand, casual and informal manner. Let us realize that we will stand to lose if we have mistaken notions concerning the use of God's word and do not utilize its full value. Such an attitude will inevitably keep God's people in a place of spiritual deficiency. May the Lord indelibly impress this upon our hearts! Saints, if we hear the word of God in all its reality and depths, it will bring about a godly fear to walk in it. There will be an overriding desire to please the Lord. The Lord has laid a burden on me to warn His people of the great need to take to heart all that He is speaking to us.

God wants to do a reducing work in the midst of His own people by the Spirit, as He did in the days of Gideon. What does that mean? In Gideon's days thousands volunteered to fight the battle against the Midianites; but seeing that the majority of them had vested interests, the Lord said to Gideon, "*The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.*" (*Judges 7:2*). The Lord sent the majority of His people back. He sent them away because they had their own self-interests. God reduced the number of people who were getting ready to fight the battle against the Midianites.

Then, once again, the Lord told Gideon that the people were still too many in number (*Judges 7:4*). Most of the warriors did not have a heart to fight for the testimony of the Lord. They were concerned about many other things, and so the Lord had to insist on reducing the number further. They had not considered His testimony and their lives did not match it. The Lord hesitated in His heart; He held back,



He had a reservation. He knew what was in man; and so He made it very clear to Gideon that He could not commit Himself to so many Israelites, because He knew what was in their hearts.

Beloved, this is a serious matter, for the Lord is going to do a work of reducing and sifting in the midst of God's people. **This is the hour of His separating or reducing work.** Where will you stand in this hour? He is testing His people at the waters of the Word as in the days of Gideon. The Lord wants to set aside those who are not serious and not willing to pay the price to bear His testimony. He would like to separate those who are not walking in His ways and purpose because they have not given themselves to His Word fully.

Beloved, if you have taken His word lightly, let your heart be gripped by a reverential fear. If you have not heard His word unto obedience, then you stand on a dangerous ground. What crossed your mind when you last heard the word of the Lord? What did you do with that Word you heard?

In the days of Gideon, God brought the people to the waters to test them. God wanted to reduce their number for He knew their heart. God did not tell them that He wanted to test them. They did not know that they were being tested. Had they known it, they would have done things differently. They would have tried to do things in a way that would have met with His approval. **Likewise, God doesn't tell us either when He brings us to situations and trials!** God is bringing His people to a place of sanctification by His word. There need to be a fear upon

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the hearts of His people that they may not be weeded out! What this means is that there will be many who will not walk in His way. Will you be one of them who will be found walking in His way? Will you give yourself to be sanctified and separated by the Word? What will you do, having heard the Word?

Beloved, remember that this string of messages have not been given to us to bring about some kind of excitement; it is neither a word that would cause us to be neutral. But it was a Word that would bring a challenge and a great reverential fear, provided we have heard it by the Spirit. If anyone has felt merely excited by the Word they have heard, then all it means is that they have not really heard the word inwardly. Our attitude towards His word is very important in this hour.

There are some brothers and sisters who feel that the Lord's reducing work is applicable to others, but not to them. They need to take heed. They need to cry out, "Lord, when your reducing hour comes, help me to be a part of the company of people that qualify to stand for the testimony of the Lord, and not to be part of those that are being rejected." Remember, when Jesus told His disciples that one of them would betray Him, He did not bring them a word of excitement. It was a word of caution! It was a word urging them to examine themselves! Some asked "Lord, is it I?" They were so concerned about the word of the Lord that they were taken up by it. The Amplified Bible submits, *"They were exceedingly pained {and} distressed {and} deeply hurt {and} sorrowful and began to say to Him one after another, Surely it cannot be I, Lord, can it?"* **Saints,**



when the Lord speaks His heart's pains and sorrows, it does not produce excitement, but a searching of our own lives in relation to that Word! Our heart's cry ought to be, "Lord, help me to be a part of Your elect company when the reducing hour is at hand and when You sanctify Your people by Your word."

LIVING BEFORE THE LIVING JUDGE

In the Book of Revelation, we see the Lord standing as a Judge in the midst of the churches. We have to know that we are standing before the Judge in our lives and that we are to be open to Him in our daily lives. Now is the time to bring our lives before the Judge, and not wait for that Day when He will finally judge all things. Let us remember the words of Paul to the Corinthian saints, *"For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."* (1 Corinthians 11:31-32)

The most important thing is to know that we live before the living Judge, and therefore we are to be governed by His judgments! We are not to judge others; nor are we to have our own opinions about others. We are not to be governed by the judgments or opinions of others; neither are we to live by our own judgments. We have to submit our lives to the Lord, His opinions and His judgments only.

In the Book of Revelation, we read that John fell as dead before the Lord.

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Revelation 1:17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

John was in the Spirit and did not judge others as men normally do. He was what he was in the presence of the Judge of all things! His only desire was to present himself to the Lord and know the Lord's opinion about his own life. He was not concerned about others but about himself. That is why he was able to see the un-Christ-likeness in his life. He had stopped judging others. **As long as our eyes are upon others, we shall not see that we need to be judged. This is the reason why many do not grow to maturity.** The greatest problem among spiritual people is that they become too judgmental. They readily judge others, but fail to judge themselves. This is the great tragedy of many believers who are not open for the Spirit to judge them. **Saints, if you truly desire to be overcomers, then it is imperative that you must stop judging others.** You must willingly give yourselves to the Lord's judgments and opinions about your lives. This will definitely help you to grow in the Lord. This truth has to be lived in the light of the Scripture, "*Judge not . . . , but judge righteous judgment.*" (John 7:24)

In the love of Christ, I would like to say that if we are serious with this call upon our lives, then we must be open to God's evaluations, judgments and workings in our lives. **Our spiritual growth and enlightenment depends upon how open we are before His presence.** We cannot be overcomers if we are given to criticizing and judging others. This is where God's people are many a time. They want to



grow spiritually, but their lives are contrary to what they confess. Their values, their attitudes, their judgments and their behaviors stand in contrast to all they declare verbally. There is *a strong root of deception* in many lives. We have to be open to God's evaluations about us. In the love of the Lord, I have spent long hours with some believers telling them of their inward state, because they do not easily accept that they are being deceived. Many of them have closed their hearts to the judgments and evaluations of the Lord. They have developed a hardness in their hearts. This can happen to anyone who is not sensitive to the Lord. Each one of us needs to be open to the convicting work of the Spirit. We have to be open in our hearts to the details that the Spirit will bring to us. And then in the light of those convictions, we must be willing to move on. Saints, be determined to obey His voice in the convictions that He brings. And then seek to be brought into the fullness of those convictions in the days ahead. **The convicting work of the Spirit will also bring us into the conforming work of His will, provided we are willing to cooperate with the Holy Spirit who is the custodian of all that the Father has for His people.**

During my trips to various places, I have found ample evidence of believers being ruled by their judgments, evaluations and opinions of other believers. **The effect of this is that their spiritual lives are put on hold. This brings confusion and misunderstanding.** And it takes a great deal of time to clear it up and restore the brethren. So it is important to be ruled by the judgments of the Spirit, and not by the judgments of others. First and foremost, we must allow the Spirit to be the judge of our own lives. Be

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bold to pray to the Spirit, "Lord, I want You to evaluate my life." Don't waste your precious time judging others and listening to the evaluations of others. We thank the Lord for the body of Christ where God has placed us, and where we are being built into His many-membered body. Our brothers and sisters in the Lord are precious to us for our growth. We do not demean this divine provision of God for our enlargement. We are open to the input of the Holy Spirit through them in our lives, for we *read*, "God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry land." (Psalm 68:6). He sets us in God's family, the body of Christ; but the "rebellious dwell in a dry land".

One day, a brother turned to me and said that he wanted to grow spiritually. He said that he wanted to experience spiritual growth in the local church. I told him that that was the very thing that I desired to see in his life. But his priorities and decisions in life did not match his longing to grow spiritually. His personal ambitions were not in line with this; they contradicted and challenged his own desires to grow in the Lord. There was a variance or inconsistency right there. This brother wanted to do something in his personal life that did not match the will of God as well as his own desires to grow spiritually. This was difficult for him to understand. It is quite common for believers to be deceived by the enemy and by their own fleshly desires. It becomes very difficult to draw them away from their own opinions and decisions, because they fail to see the true convictions of the Spirit any more. It is really dangerous to be on such a ground. Saints, I would like to persuade and implore everyone to see that spiritual growth is closely linked to



the judgments, evaluations and opinions of the Spirit concerning your individual and personal life. Please be open and let the Spirit lead you to His conforming work in your life.

CASTING OUR CARES UPON THE LORD

We have all read about the Lord's judgments upon His churches in Asia, that are given in *Revelation* Chapters 2 and 3. We have seen in our meditations that His judgments were totally different from the opinions and judgments of men. We have specially considered the judgment of God concerning the church at Smyrna in

Revelation 2:8-10

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.

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The Lord said to the church in Smyrna, "*Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer.*" The Lord knew that they were a suffering church and that they had been going through many trials and tribulations. The Lord had found them to be faithful in the past. And to such a church, the Lord did not hesitate to say that they would have to undergo even more suffering.

Most people would have been discouraged to hear such a word coming from the Lord! The Lord told them to be faithful, even if it amounted to death. The suffering that they would have to bear could mean death to some of them! And even more trouble would come to them in the pursuit of the calling! The Lord impressed upon them not to fear what lay ahead as they continued to bear the testimony of the Lord! 'Fear not,' also means that He would watch over them as His people with a caring eye. This is the greatest of consolations to those who suffer for His name and for His testimony in these last days.

Peter, the one who wanted to run away from suffering, tells us a lot about suffering in his epistles in the Bible. This shows that the Lord had really changed this man through the suffering he had to undergo! The Lord took Peter in the way of suffering so that he could counsel others by what he had experienced.

1Peter 2:19, 20, 21

19 For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.



20 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

Peter was now able to say, "When we suffer, when we are not wrong but right and yet suffer, that is worthy of His name." Peter gives the example of the Lord.

1Peter 2:23 , 24

23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; **but committed himself to him** that judgeth righteously:

24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

The Lord Jesus committed Himself to the One that judged righteously. God is going to judge this world in righteousness by one Man whom He has ordained (Acts 17:31). How precious it is to know that we have a God who will judge all things righteously and that we are to commit our lives to Him.

1Peter 3:12- 14

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12 For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

13 And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

14 But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

See very clearly the expression of Peter in verse 12 in the Amplified Bible.

1Peter 3:12,13 ,14

12 For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous (those who are upright and in right standing with God), and His ears are attentive to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who practice evil [to oppose them, to frustrate, and defeat them].

13 Now who is there to hurt you if you are zealous followers of that which is good?

14 But even in case you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, [you are] blessed (happy, to be envied). Do not dread or be afraid of their threats, nor be disturbed [by their opposition].

The Lord's eyes are upon His chosen ones. And who are they that will harm us? Note that in the same breath



the Spirit has used two conjunctions: 'but' and 'if'. If the Lord in His will would allow some suffering to come upon us, we are to accept it and also know that His eyes are still upon us. For His righteousness' sake, for His testimony's sake, and for His word's sake, God may allow some suffering and this we must gladly accept. That is God's word (1 Peter 3:14). His eyes are upon His people. But if we suffer, then it is in His will that we suffer; and we are not to be fearful, but trust Him and commit our lives to Him who judgeth all things righteously.

Peter gives us a deep understanding about suffering, though he was the one who wanted to run away from suffering. Yet he suffered and was transformed so that he could share these things with others. Peter used to be so concerned about his own safety, but God changed him. Then writing out of his own experience, he was able to tell others that God cared for His own.

Again in 1 Peter 5:7 we read, " *Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.*"

"He careth for you". We may go through many sufferings, tribulations and trials in our lives; but we need to know the words of Peter, who says that the Lord's eyes are upon you and that He cares for you. That is what the Lord said to the church in Smyrna: "*I am the First and the Last. Fear not these things that I have allowed to come upon you.*" This is God's attitude towards His own that He cares for them. This word should cast fears away from our hearts. **This Scripture speaks of the position and attitude of the Lord towards His own people.** And the realization of the truth will

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produce in us a certain state of peace and tranquility. **The Lord's attitude is one of solicitude towards His own people;** and so Peter says, "*For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers*". The Lord's attitude towards His own is one of deep concern for them. He knows them and His eyes are upon them. When we go through situations that God allows, let us not throw up our hands in despair thinking that there is no hope. We need to stand on this word and cast out every fear, because He cares for us. This will enable us to be in a place of restfulness in our hearts in moments of hopelessness. We need to cast our care upon Him because He cares for us. The Amplified Bible says that we are to cast the 'whole' of our cares upon Him. All our anxieties, all our cares are to be cast upon Him, for He affectionately cares for us. He watchfully keeps us on His mind. **Let us not forget that not only are His eyes upon us, but he has His ears open to us!** Further, Peter says the Lord takes definite care about us. Peter speaks quite specifically of these important things.

The Lord expects a response to His concern over us. **When the Lord says, "Happy is he.," it means if you realize His word and accept God's concern, it will produce a state of restfulness and carefulness in you.** There are several words which are very specifically used by the Lord.

In the passage, "Casting all your cares or anxieties" (1 *Peter* 5:7), the word 'casting' firstly, is used in a very deliberate sense. This word is specifically used twice in the New Testament. In *Luke* 19:35 "*And they brought him to*



Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon." Here we have a picture of people casting their garments upon a colt, so that Jesus could ride upon it. This was a deliberate act by the people: they took their garments off and put them upon the colt. This gives us the mental conception of the word used here "casting all your cares". **Casting our cares and burdens upon the Lord amounts to deliberate acts on our part.** It is something quite precise. We also need to take our worries, our anxieties and our concerns and place them at His feet. There is a deliberation involved in our acts. We need to take out or cast off those things that worry us, and cast them upon the Lord; for He cares for us. Peter says all our anxieties, worries, and concerns that grip us and worry us, are to be cast upon Him. **Just as these people pulled their garments off their bodies and cast them on the colt for the Lord to sit, even so, we have to deliberately pull off these garments of heaviness, worries, anxieties, concerns, suffering etc., and cast them off, so that the Lord can sit over them and ride as our King!** We are not to be caught up with the things that worry us and cause us to be anxious. Saints, we are to be caught up with Him, His word and His testimony. If we are open in our hearts and caught up with His needs and His purpose, then the Lord will give us the boldness to suffer for Him. If we are worried, we shall not be able to suffer for Him.

THE DISTRACTIONS AND CARES OF THE WORLD

Secondly, the word 'cares' or 'care' is translated as

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“anxiety’ by several translators of the Bible. This word means “being drawn about”, *i.e.* to be pulled in various directions at the same time. This state can also be termed as “being distracted.” When Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Martha and Mary, He used a very specific word that falls in line with God’s thought towards us.

Luke 10:41, 42

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.

In the original, the word ‘careful’ means ‘anxious’. It is used in place of the word ‘careful’.

Let us picture the situation. Jesus tells Martha that she is anxious and troubled about many things. The Lord is present there and Mary sits at the feet of the Lord. Martha no doubt likes to be where Mary is. When she sees Mary sitting right in front of the Lord and listening to His words of eternal life, there is something that pulls her towards them. **Yet there are all those other things she is occupied with and she is pulled in that direction as well. Being pulled in various directions, Martha is thrown into a state of ‘anxiety’ – a state of agitation and distraction. The whole atmosphere is disturbed and she is anxious!**



Concerns, fears, troubles and anxieties can distract us, just as they distracted Martha and kept her from having the good things that Mary had chosen. Anxieties can distract us from what we ought to be focused upon. How often we are caught up in such an atmosphere! We don't realize that like Martha, we are cumbered by many things. We always think that we are like Mary who sat at His feet. Is it not strange that we often see ourselves in the garb of saintly people such as Mary, Joseph, Daniel, and David? Let this come upon us with conviction. Let us see that we are more often like Martha who was distracted from the things of God. Like Martha, many a time, we know where we ought to be, we do feel a pull towards the Lord and His presence; yet there are all those other things that occupy our minds and life. Thus we are found to be anxious in our lives! This is what Peter tells us. He urges us to cast all our cares, worries and concerns upon the Lord.

Mary chose to sit at His feet. If your eyes are focused rightly upon the Lord, you would have no anxieties. But if your focus is intercepted by several other things in your life, it will distract you and pull you apart. Then you will be in a place of deep disturbance and anxiety, rather than in a place of peace and calm.

The Lord used the same word in the parable of the sower and the seed, concerning the seed that fell among thorns.

Mark 4:18, 19

18 And these are they which are sown among thorns;

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such as hear the word,

19 And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

The Lord interpreted the thorns as the cares of life. Here we read about the cares, distractions and anxieties of life. **The burdens of this life leave no place or time for a quiet contemplation of the Word. Nor do they urge us to respond to the word that has come from the Lord!** When distractions and anxieties grip us, they do not allow us to focus our attention upon the Lord for His evaluations and assessments of our lives. The cares of life leave us no time to give ourselves to the word that God speaks to us. The Lord is sowing His word in us day after day, and week after week; but is there the time to respond to the Word?!

The word that the Lord speaks has great possibilities and power. However, as often happens, as soon as we hear His word, we are called off in another direction, to get involved in something disarming and frivolous. We get engrossed in all sorts of things that somehow spring up at the same time. Then, sad to say, the Word does not stand a chance. How true that is, saints of God! Our anxieties for other things choke the Word. However, the Word we have heard has to grow, sprout and spring forth within us. This is not possible if we are caught up with cares, riches and the lust for other things. Many of us are so busy in the work of God that we have little time to sit before His face! Activities, however purposeful, cannot be interpreted as life. It is unfortunate that people do not have enough time to



contemplate, to meditate, and to allow the Judge of all things to review and examine their lives. How can His life come forth in us if we give but a fraction of our time to wait before the Lord, to hold our lives before His word, and to respond to His voice?

CAREFULNESS OR CARELESSNESS?

Titus 3:8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.

Thirdly, as we continue with the word study, the word 'careful' is seen being used in a positive and constructive sense. We find exhortations to carefulness scattered through the New Testament. In other words, we are exhorted to take care. We have to clearly note that it is not the same original word here as the one we have been considering so far. **When the Lord says, "in nothing be anxious" or "casting all your anxiety upon Him", the Lord does not mean that you are to become careless or indifferent. Not at all! The Lord does not mean that you to put matters away as though they have nothing to do with you and you have no place in them at all. Rather, it is a place where the Lord expects us to take care, to be careful, to recognize that we have a responsibility, that we have to be watchful!**

If someone were to say, "I am not going to care for my family. I have left it to the Lord to care for them," it would

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amount to neglecting one's responsibilities. We have to be watchful, trust the Lord, believe on His word and be found faithful. To cast our cares upon the Lord does not mean that we can be careless and walk in our own understanding. We have to be careful to maintain good works, as Paul told Titus. We have to maintain a discipline and care about our responsibilities. We have to be watchful over our lives because it is not a careless life but a life of accountability, responsibility and faithfulness that we are called to live.

Philippians 4:6, 7

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6 (Amplified) Do not fret or have any anxiety about anything, but in every circumstance and in everything, by prayer and petition (definite requests), with thanksgiving, continue to make your wants known to God.

In the light of the Scriptures and the passages we have considered, the 'anxieties' and 'cares' that we cast before the Lord is a very serious matter. **While our secular work must go on and many things must be attended to in our responsibilities, there must be no distraction resulting from the worry of those things.** This is precisely



what the Lord tells us in the Gospel of Matthew, "*Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?'*" (Matthew 6:31-32 NASB). **What this amounts to or what this conveys is that it is not just a psychological decision or a resolution not to be careless that is going to make the difference; it is not our decision of being indifferent or not bothering about those matters that will bring change. Saints, what matters is that it has to be a positive act of faith in our lives.** May the Lord open your eyes!

Routine activities like eating, drinking and dressing do not in any way take us away from the more important responsibility of living the Word. It is in living day by day that we have to deliberately cast our cares upon the Lord and trust Him to keep us in places of responsibility, taking care of what He has entrusted to us with prayer and supplication.

When we cast our cares upon the Lord we deliberately trust the Lord to help us take care of the important issues of this life. Casting our cares upon the Lord, talks of taking a very definite responsibility. It involves responsibly trusting Him because His eyes are upon the righteous and He cares for us. It amounts to having faith in the Lord. **It is a definite faith in our hearts that refuses to be harassed by anxiety.**

In the course of our life in the Lord and in this calling as His remnant, we come across various situations where people judge us, pass comments, and do so many things

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behind our backs. However, through it all, our trustful prayer to the Lord must be to help us not to get diverted or distracted from His will and purpose in our lives. Our sole aspiration must be not to be moved away from all that He has entrusted into our hands. We may look foolish in the eyes of the world and unwise to the clever minds of men, but we need to seek Him for faith to trust the One who is a righteous judge and cares for us. We need to refuse to be harassed by situations or to be distracted by the opinions of others. That is the prayer of my heart in these challenging days. **Our accountability and faithfulness is not unto men, but unto the Judge of all things. We have no route and provision for escapism in this. We must live before the Lord with a great inward conviction.**

Inevitably, there will be those who are opposed to the truth we declare and live. There can be little doubt that when you align yourself to the Lord and His purpose in this hour of compromise and decline among God's people, you will suffer reproach, rejection, be ill-spoken, and even be counted as among the evil! Even though this will happen, remember that you need to help and encourage them to know the truth.

Some time ago, a dear brother wanted to leave the local church to which the Lord had added him. He was apparently offended with the leadership and with certain things in that place. I counseled him to carefully reconsider the matter before taking any decision. Walking in the whole counsel of God depended upon being with the local church and growing spiritually in the house of God. I asked him why he wanted to leave the local church. He did not give



me a clear answer. Every effort to help him see the point bore no fruit. Finally, I told him lovingly, "Dear brother, after you leave the local church, you will be tempted to speak against the leadership as well as the fellowship, which is what normally happens to all those who take such a contrary path." This dear brother told me that he would never do such things. I warned him that human tendency was to justify one's own ways and decisions. If someone asked him why he had left the local church, he would be tempted to explain that he was right and others were wrong. People who leave the calling and cover up their actions with some reasoning of their own soon begin to tell others of things that had not even happened in the local church. They begin by speaking unrealities and ultimately end up lying deliberately. After hearing me quietly, he said, "This may have happened to many others, but it shall not happen with me." The sad but true story is that soon after he decided to leave that local church. As soon as he left it, he began speaking hateful things against God's people, spreading lies and making false allegations. This is certainly not an isolated case. This is increasingly happening among the true people of God!

When we get to hear such things, there is no doubt that we feel bad, but we must not let such things distract us in our pursuit of the life in Christ. We must have faith in the Lord and not be distracted by what people say to defend their wrong actions. You will not be able to stand in the days ahead if you do not have a faith of that kind. Let your prayer to the Lord be to give you faith that refuses to be distracted or harassed by situations. God is sending His word with a purpose. I know that I need this word and God

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is preparing me with this word in these days. We see the faith of many being disturbed in these days. Their faith is being tested and they are being distracted by their family, their jobs, their situations, and by allegations, lies, reproaches and evil speaking. But let not your faith be disturbed or distracted.

Saints, from the few experiences I have had, I have found that anxiety usually enters when we begin to consider how things are going to turn out to be, or what the issues are going to be. What we need to always do is to consider our own responsibility. **The right care is to do our part. The carefulness in our life is the result of committing the issue to the Lord and definitely taking the faith-attitude that He will look after the outcome, while we are looking after what is ours to look after. It is not a spineless optimism, but it is definite faith faith that refuses to be harassed and distracted by many things, by anything!**

Beloved brethren, the people of God to whom Apostle Peter wrote, might well have been, and probably were very much in anxious suspense in their lives. The situations could have been exceedingly difficult for them. **It may be that their homes, their families, their livelihood, their very lives, their all were in danger. It could be that they were under threat and peril from every direction.** What Peter says in effect is, "The Lord has the issues in hand; He is taking care about all that; you cast your anxiety upon Him because He really does care". What Peter spoke to them surely needs to be spoken to us in this hour and time.



Dearly beloved, you and I have to believe that God does care, and believing that, we definitely and deliberately need to cast upon Him that which would cause us to be distraught with anxiety. We have to lay our anxieties of how things are going to work out, and what the issues are going to be upon His shoulders. Very deliberately casting all our anxieties on Him, even as *“He careth for you,”* is a **deliberate act of faith. *“The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears unto their supplication...who is he that will harm you, if ye be zealous of that which is good?”***

Let us recollect that the church in Smyrna could stand every kind of disturbance and reproach only because their faith withstood all the distractions that came their way. Their faith refused to be harassed by the situations. May this word strengthen your inner man and refresh your spirit to stand for His testimony in this hour, like the remnant of old!



THE CALL OF THE REMNANT





chapter six

HOLDING FAST - TO HIS TESTIMONY



STANDING FOR THE TESTIMONY OF CHRIST

God's word is preparing His remnant for things that the Lord has upon His heart. I believe that the Lord is preparing His church for the Last Days. He is ministering His word to His church that is called to stand upon the word of the Lord and His testimony, despite the difficulties she encounters from day to day. This is the hour that we must give ourselves to the voice of the Lord and hear Him clearly and diligently.

Revelation 1:8,9

8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

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9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 2:8-10

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.

Revelation 3:7-13

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

In these verses, we see two churches at Philadelphia and Smyrna standing for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. These two churches did not receive any rebuke from the Lord; they did not receive any negative report from the Lord regarding the kind of lives they lived. **These two churches prove that it is possible to be blameless like them when the Lord comes to judge the churches.** And this should be a challenge to us, individually and corporately. The little spiritual strength

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they had was used by them to obey the word of the Lord. They held on to the name of the Lord and maintained the testimony of Jesus. They had no influence or power of their own. They faithfully followed the two oft-repeated exhortations in the Book of Revelation, namely to obey the word diligently, and to maintain the testimony of the Lord or confess the name of the Lord! We see that only two churches were found to be faithful because their main concern was the evaluation of the Lord. Their sole desire was to know the mind of the Lord for their lives. Saints, these are primary requirements for the remnant church of today.

One of the significant things that the Lord says as He stands in the midst of His churches is, "I come quickly". In this prophetic expression of the Lord, we can sense that the day of His judgment is very near. We have to view our lives, individually and collectively, in the light of His coming and His judgments. When He stands in the midst of His churches, what will He say? How will He evaluate you as His church? How will He judge your life? These are matters of extreme importance and significance for our lives. What will flow out of His heart? What will be His evaluations?

Today little attention is paid by churches to the Day of the Lord and to His judgments on that Day. He will judge His house first; but people do not fear that He is coming to judge the lives of His people. They seem to have lost all fear of His judgments. They fail to hold His word in reverence and obey it. They do not realize that the day is not far off when God will judge all things by one Man. When He brings His judgments upon the churches, what will He have to say



about His people? What will He speak as regard to their lives?

The Lord says, "Behold I come quickly". The issue after all, at the end, in the coming of the Lord, will be that which draws out from His own heart and makes it possible for the Lord to say "I have loved thee". I was greatly encouraged by that one expression in *Revelation* Chapter 3 and verse 9, which says, ... behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." The Lord says that He has loved them. To hear words such as this from the Lord's mouth, "I have loved thee," sounds very discriminatory and selective. There is an emphasis upon 'thee' – I have loved *thee*. **That represents a certain condition of God's people that does answer to the heart of the Lord in Philadelphia.** When the Lord saw them in that condition, He was able to say that He loved them. What is that condition? I perceive that the condition they maintained in their midst was to know what was upon the heart of the Lord. Their condition was an answer to what God had upon His heart. Their heart was, in one sense, fused with His heart. **Their hearts were in total unity with the heart of the Lord.** God saw that the heart-disposition of the people in the church at Philadelphia was to be caught up with the mind and heart of the Lord to the exclusion of everything else. What concerned them most was the purpose of the Lord, the will of the Lord, the word of the Lord and the testimony of the Lord. And when God saw that their heart-condition was solely for the Lord and His interests, He did not hesitate to say, "I have loved thee."

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THE DOOR THAT NO MAN CAN SHUT

We know that God loves all His children, and there can be no doubt about that; but there seems to be something special when He sees a people whose hearts are toward Him. The people in the church at Philadelphia were faithful, for the Lord had told them, "*I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.*" They were a faithful group of people and they held on to the word of the Lord and the testimony of Christ in their little strength. This signifies that in the End-Times, there will certainly be a people who will hold on to the word and the testimony of the Lord in their little strength. Be that as it may, we need to know that the testimony will be held in straightness by a people who will be walled up and shut in. This is a very important thing. 'Walls' always talk about the testimony. Nehemiah raised the walls of Jerusalem in his day; he maintained the testimony of the Lord. When people raise a wall around their gardens, they look for making themselves secure. This indicates that the garden is theirs, that it belongs exclusively to someone. The testimony is something that is locked up: it will not be appreciated by others, it will be limited; it will be hedged up, and it will be shut in. In the midst of difficulty and hard times in these last days, a people will hold on to the testimony of the Lord.

The Lord began to open my eyes as I meditated on portions of verses 7 & 8 of *Revelation* Chapter 3, ". . . he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and



no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth: "*I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it...*" A key and a door talk of something that has been locked; of something that men would shut out or reject out right and not appreciate. That which is closed and locked refers to what people would hinder, frustrate, and curtail. But the Lord says that He has the key to all things that are hidden and locked up. **The Lord says, "Let men shut you out, hinder you, curtail your actions, box you in, and frustrate you, but know that I can set before you a door which no one can close. Keys and doors are ultimately with Me, in the midst of severest straitening, curtailment and difficulty. I have the key of the doors that close before you."** I have been encouraged and strengthened by these ministrations of the Lord in my personal life on several occasions.

Saints, it does not matter what man closes. We have seen how men would hinder, curtail, limit, close and lock up things; but the Lord says to His church that He has the key. The Lord says that He has kept His testimony for Himself, and therefore let men hinder it and limit it, He still has the key to open the closed doors. Men have shut out His testimony, limited it and frustrated it, locked it out and closed the doors to His Presence; but He can set before us a door which no man can ever close, for He has the key to every door. Saints, I have seen how men have attempted to close and seal the doors to the testimony of the Lord by their lies, their deception and their falsehood; but praise the Lord that He has the key to every closed door.

When the Asian Games were held in Delhi in 1982, I

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went to South India with two young men. I felt that was the mind of God for us. The Lord wanted us to travel south from Delhi, though many preachers were making their way to Delhi to evangelize people during the Asiad. We had been invited repeatedly by a person to come to Kerala and hold meetings; but when we went there, we were told the meetings had been cancelled, and furthermore, that man refused to meet us. It seemed that the door had been closed due to the allegations, assertions, propaganda, lies and accusations of men against us. It was a very difficult situation and I was young in the Lord and in the work of the Lord. I had never faced a situation like that before as well. The Lord gave the grace to die to self and to the insults that we had to face at that moment. Many others who reproached and spoke lies about us got much arsenal in their weaponry. However, the Lord opened another door in the same area. The Lord spoke to another man to receive us and he arranged for meetings with some hungry souls. There have been several such occasions when I experienced the Lord opening a door when men would hinder, limit and curtail! Glory to God and praise His Name! **I know that even today, after almost 30 years after that first experience, there are men who try to limit, hinder, frustrate and if possible close the doors of this ministry by lies, slander, accusation and allegations, but it is my continual experience that when God opens a door no man can shut it.** All these things will happen, but the word of the Lord to the faithful church is, "Let man limit you, frustrate and hinder you; yet when I open a door, no man can shut the door, for I have the key." Praise the Lord! The Lord is able to set before us a door that no man can close. The key to every door is ultimately in His hands. In spite of the most severe



curtailment, hindrances, and difficulties, the Lord says, "He that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth". It was at the last lap of that trip to South India that the Lord opened a door in the city of Secunderabad that was shut by the enemy through confusion, lies and allegations. How much we thank God for the remnant of God in that city that the Lord has secured for Himself!

Brethren, beloved of the Lord, let us not be bothered about doors that are closed and barred before our face. Instead, let us be encouraged that we have One who has the key to every door. We need to be faithful to Him. What He opens, no power on earth can shut. There is no power that can stand up against Him. Let us draw strength from this. Men may close and shut us out from reaching out to others, but we have the Lord who alone has the key to the door that will always be open. The Lord says to the church that is faithful that He has set before them a door that cannot be closed. No one will be able to shut that door. Our faithfulness to the Word and His testimony is so very important. The Lord is continually laying this upon my heart. In these last days, it is vital to be faithful to the Lord.

Many things are happening in the Christian world, but God has His eyes upon the faithful remnant. Seeing their faithfulness, the Lord will set before them an open door. Satan will oppose their position. **But the gates of hell will not be able to prevail against the church, for this is a triumphant church that Satan himself is afraid of.**

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Revelation 3:9 "Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee."

That the forces of evil are present to hinder God's people, is made clear in this verse. **It is very interesting and significant to see that the term 'synagogue of Satan' is used in connection with only two churches, namely Smyrna and Philadelphia, which did not bear a negative report and whom the Lord commended unreservedly.** Those two churches were wholehearted for God, and Satan opposed them through the religious people. Note carefully that Satan does not use the people of the world to oppose them, but uses the religious people those who call themselves God's people to come against the remnant church. O this is most interesting! When we read about other churches, we see that Satan opposed them through the world. However, when it comes to His true remnant, Satan uses religious people as instruments to oppose them. The enemy finds ways to hinder God's people through those who called themselves God's people, but truly are not. That is why it has been made known to us that real persecution against the true remnant will come from religious folks who have aligned themselves with the world. They will compromise their positions and therefore will not be those who suffer at the hands of evil forces. The true church will definitely face much more suffering; but praise God they will stand on the promises of God for them. The wholehearted church that is standing for the testimony of the Lord, will always be strongly opposed by "the synagogue of Satan".



In much the same way, we see that when Jesus was upon the earth He was not opposed by the Romans and the Greeks, the people of the world; but He was opposed by the religious Jews—the very ones who read and meditated upon the Word of God every day. It has been so in the history of the church, and it will be the same in the Last Days. Let us know this! The main opposition will come from those who claim to be Christians and those who do not practice an overcoming life. The main opposition will come from them. We may not be experiencing it much now, but it is only a matter of time when we shall see the reality of this in many measures in our lives.

Revelation Chapter 3 verse 9 emphasizes the fact that the synagogue of Satan will consist of those who say they are Jews but in fact they are not, and they lie that they are the true people of God. They lie about who they really are. They pose to be true people of God, but in reality they are “the synagogue of Satan”. **This means that there is an imitation. “The synagogue of Satan” implies that which seeks to imitate, seeks to pretend, and seeks to represent what is of God, but is not of God. It is something which seeks to simulate, imitate and falsely represent what is of God. It is not a true representation but it claims to be; it is not pure, but appears to be. It is a mixture-- and God hates mixture.** That is why the Lord says to the church at Philadelphia, “*These things saith he that is holy, he that is true*”. This is the reason the Lord introduces Himself as One that is holy and One that is true, in contrast to that which is false and impure, that which is not transparent. The One who is true knows what is not true. The Lord, who is holy and pure, whose eyes are like

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the flame of fire, is able to see through all imitation and pretense. He is not deceived by appearances. He is able to gauge the difference between the true testimony and the false testimony that has an odor of duplication, imitation, pretense, and counterfeit substance. This shows how careful we have to be about the true testimony and the false one.

The church at Philadelphia was standing true to the Word and the testimony of Jesus Christ; but alongside there was a 'synagogue of Satan', presenting a false testimony, something that was wholly in contrast to all that was holy and true. It was merely simulating the things of God and not representing the reality of God's trueness. The eyes of the Lord who stands in the midst of the seven churches, will not overlook or spare anyone that is not up to His own standard.

May God help us to see that in the midst of all that is happening around us, there is much that is false. There is so much of lying today. A true testimony will be based upon that which is true. The Lord is establishing His testimony amongst a people who will love the truth and will give themselves to the living of the truth. This will be set against all that is false around us. We can see a system around us that is set against that which is the true testimony of the Lord. On the one hand, we see a pure testimony of the Lord, based upon the truth of God's word, being established in a people who will cling to the truth and who will be faithful to the testimony of the Lord, loving the truth and living the truth, paying a great price! And on the other hand, we find a majority system that is of man, that is fuelled by the enemy



and set against the pure testimony of the Lord. That is what we see in history and today as well. This is also so evident in these two churches in the book of Revelation.

'The synagogue of Satan' is a system in antagonism to the pure, clear and full testimony of the Lord Jesus. This is a popular system and has all the doors open in all directions with every one acclaiming and sponsoring! The great false system of man will be a well-accepted thing by the majority: it will be a popular thing in the eyes of men; it will open its doors in all directions. Missions throughout the world today have kept their doors always wide open to the false propaganda, and everyone is found sponsoring and acclaiming their missions. **On the other hand, the true church of the Lord, is far from being popular and acceptable: it is shut out and people have closed their doors to it; the world does not acclaim and sponsor its efforts to spread the true Word.** People say about us, "These people don't believe in the Second Coming of Christ." They speak lies. How much we believe and declare in words and also through our writings that Christ will return soon for a glorious church without spot and wrinkle. Our whole faith is in the direction of the hope that we shall be like Him when He appears! The doors to our church are closed by their lies, but praise God that He is delivering us from them. The doors to the church of the Lord in the End-Times have been closed by the world; **but the Lord says to the church, "Never mind, saints of God. I have the key; the real issue is with me."** This is so strengthening. Let us thank the Lord for the closed doors that we come across in our lives. When He opens those doors, no man will then be able to shut them.

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The Lord says in verse 9, *"behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee."* God will let His people, who have been shut in and shut out, know that He loves them. He will make 'the synagogue of Satan' recognize the work of God in the midst of His people. In some obvious way the Lord will make it very clear to those who call themselves Jews (and are not) to reckon that God is with His people. How the Lord will do it is not yet known, but do it He will. Let us be open to His work and His Spirit. The agents of Satan will be compelled to reckon the obvious way that God will work in His people. No wonder, Apostle Paul says that Satan will be crushed under the feet of the church (in *Roman 16:20*). We must never forget that God is always on the side of those who will obey His word and bear the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us not be worried about how many people are on the side of those who stand with the truth, bearing the testimony of the Lord. The question is whether we are standing with the Lord in this hour or not. God stands with us if we stand for His testimony and let us therefore not be concerned about how others stand. God is committed to stand with His church when we stand with Him for His testimony, and for His glory and name. We never need to fear Satan and his agents. We may have to suffer, but the Lord will stand with us even if we have to go through the fire. That is His promise.

THE LORD'S LOVE FOR THE FAITHFUL

In His high priestly prayer, Jesus prayed,



John 17:23 "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

The Lord's prayer was answered in Philadelphia. The Father's love was clearly manifested to the Philadelphians. God manifested His love in the very place where 'the synagogue of Satan' was operating, so that Satan would know. Jesus prayed that the world might know that He had loved the church so that the world might come and worship Him at the feet of the church. God has wonderful ways of confounding the enemy. **God will cause the world and Satan to know that we are the object of His love.** God has His ways, and let us not meddle with His ways... Many times we say, "Lord if you love me, do this or that." And if the Lord does not do what we ask, then we point a finger at His love. God has His ways to prove that He loves us and let us not fence Him into our own little ideas of how He should love us! **He will do it in a way that will confound our enemies.** His ways are far higher and let us give in and accept His ways.

God said about the church in Philadelphia, "I have loved them." This is the manifestation of the approval of His divine love; it is the divine acknowledgment of God's love upon their lives; it is a divine approbation of their faithfulness to the Lord and to His testimony. In other words, the Lord says, "I will make them know that I have loved you, for I have seen your faithfulness to My word and My testimony." **Saints, we are yet to experience what the Lord would do when we are faithful for His word and testimony.**

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The Lord's love for the church in Philadelphia shows that there is a seeming partiality of God in the matter of His love. He told them that He was with them to prove that He loved them; He wanted to show them that He approved of their commitments to live His testimony. Scripture shows that this is the stand of God towards His people; Scriptures reveals Divine approval wherever God's people have stood for His word and His testimony. God's partiality is not for people as such, or for some persons, or some group of people or for a people among the nations. **But there is a partiality of the Lord toward faithfulness itself.** That is what counts with the Lord. God's partiality is not shown towards an individual or to some exclusive people or a company of people, **but His partiality is shown towards those who are faithful.** This is the characteristic that God has given Himself to, because He Himself is so faithful. **God draws Himself to that man or woman who is faithful toward His word and testimony.** And to them He says, "I love thee."

What a heartening thing it must have been for the people at Philadelphia to hear a message that the Lord loved them! Let me illustrate this by speaking in the present tense. I would like to put it this way.

There are a few of us here in Philadelphia who are given to the Lord and His testimony. We want to obey the Lord and His word. We meet often to encourage one another.

One of us says, "Everybody is telling me that I am the black sheep of the family because I have left the traditional church and have separated to follow the Lord and do not



conform to a lot of things my people are given to.”

Another one says, “Don’t worry, brother, we have to stand for the Lord. I also have received a letter from home which says that I have been in this church for so many years and that I am wasting my life for nothing They say that I am not ambitious like others and have no plans for future etc...”

Another says, “Don’t worry sister, God is with you. Your job will be secure God is your future. You be obedient to the Lord and focus on His purpose. He is faithful.”

Many may have many thoughts about us, even as people have a lot of opinion about us. We were troubled with many difficulties that we’re facing. Everybody is saying that God is not with us. People are saying that we are an exclusive people and hence have no future, none will marry us, none will give us jobs and none will help us. Every comment from the people we meet only reinforces the grim impression that God is not with us, that we are not prospering like others are. They say that we do not appear to be a people with whom God has anything to do, because everything is going against us. People say, “If God is with them, why do they suffer this and go through that trial etc...”

In the midst of all these discouraging words and accusations, there comes suddenly a word from the Lord saying, “I love thee.” It was a startling thing.

Why startling? Here are the oppressed saints in Philadelphia rejected by the world and the religious crowd around them.

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Saints, this is what I have been very personally experiencing. **In the midst of many accusations against the ministry, my stand and the messages, in the midst of the slander that God is not with me, suddenly I hear a very powerful word from the Lord directly or through others that God loves me!** How encouraging it must have been for that messenger or Pastor of Philadelphia to hear that God loves him and the saints. In the midst of many accusations, charges, and indictments I know what it means to receive an encouraging letter from a brother or a sister to say that they were greatly encouraged and ministered by those things God has committed to us. It soothes the wounds and applies balm to the spirit. When one is surrounded by discouraging remarks and comments, and then, all of a sudden, one receives a heartening telephone call or a whisper of encouragement, it shows us the mind of the Lord. That is the way of the Lord!

In Philadelphia they had nothing to prove that God is with them. Perhaps their church was not growing in great numbers. They had no great activities going on that man could appreciate and be drawn to. They also did not try to show and prove that God was with them by popular methods others were adopting to attract people. They did not try to show and prove that God was with them. **Today, people try to prove that God is with them by imitation and duplication, by the soul-power masquerading as the spiritual power and what they do only brings shame to the testimony of the Lord.** In contemporary Christendom, we may appear to be a people as though God is far from us; but inwardly we know that God is with us. And God will manifest that He is with us in His own way and



time. His approbation will come over our faithfulness to all that God has committed to us and His testimony. When it comes, it will not be like that of man. Saints, God is with those people who stand with Him. He loves them even though it looks as if God is not with them. God shuts the mouths of those who say, "God is not with them. Look at their condition! God is far from them!" We have no words to defend ourselves against such vehemence and cruel remarks! God will prove Himself in His time. Leave it to Him. People may continue to wonder and say, "Looking at your condition, who will say that God is with you?" But the reality is that God is with us and He will make it known in His time. This is the faith we need to have.

The people in Philadelphia were startled out of their discouragement and dissuasion by the quiet, soothing and comforting voice of the Lord that told them that He loved them. In the eyes of others they had no strength. They were a people of little strength but in that little strength they gave themselves to the Lord. They were conscious that they were of little power compared to churches around them; they were more conscious of their weakness rather than their power. They saw so many activities happening around them, but they also saw that they were weak in the light of God's great call and purpose. They were weak and yet God was speaking such great things to them. Have you felt like that? Perhaps they saw the overwhelming insufficiencies of their lives; but the Lord says, "Thou hast little strength and thou did keep My word." Where we use that little strength God has given you is important to Him. God may be speaking great and mighty things, but the point is to properly use the little strength He has given. I wish to

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paraphrase what the Lord told the church in Philadelphia: **“You have been faithful in your little strength to My thoughts and My mind I have revealed to you. You did not deny My name and you did not disobey My word; you did not capitulate. You held My name high, the name of absolute supremacy and honour and glory. You kept My name supremely above other things; you have kept My word of patience.”** That is what the Lord will even say to His remnant people in this hour if we do the same!

In Philadelphia, they saw their insufficiencies, but they obeyed His word and stood for His testimony in their little strength. That is something God will not overlook. Some of us feel that we have not been able to overcome many things in our lives in a short time; but I encourage them to see what kind of life they had before. They were not perfect, they had many difficulties and problems; but there was something within that was for the Lord. That little love that we had in the midst of the problems was for the Lord. The little strength we had was given to the Lord. That is what we have to take care of. That is the most important thing. We may be insufficient in the light of all that the Lord is saying to us, just as those in Philadelphia were and yet in that little strength they kept the word of the Lord and His testimony. And we can hear the Lord saying to us, “I know you have kept My word though you had struggles and battles. I saw that you did not deny My name and word though you came to a breaking point. You held My name supremely and honoured My testimony. You thought of My testimony and therefore I love you.” **These are the days when we need to be a people of perseverance in the**



little strength we have, and use it for the word of the Lord and His testimony. The saints in Philadelphia obeyed the word of the Lord and endured to the end in obedience. **It is only by enduring faithfully in times of temptation, that we become perfect, lacking in nothing.** (James 1:4)

THE WORD OF PATIENCE

What is meant by “the word of my patience”? “The word of my patience” seems to be a strange phrase. What does it mean? The Bible clearly shows that all through the ages, God has given His word to His servants and His chosen ones. **Though it was the Lord Himself who gave them His word, it seemed that the Lord went away, as it were, and left them waiting for its fulfillment. Often they had to wait for a very long period of time! They were tested by the Word. They had to pass through a long process of waiting for the Word to be fulfilled; they had to wait for God to honor His word!** They had to wait and wait and wait yet more. For example, when God spoke a word to Abraham to come out of Ur of the Chaldees, that word tried him in several ways. It was the word of His patience. Every time a word comes to us from the Lord, we need to have patience and wait for its fulfillment. Many times we are impatient with the word God has given us. Some ask, “When God gives a word, why doesn’t He do it immediately?” They say, “What is the point of giving us a word that He would fulfill after ten years?” This is our problem, for we are very impatient. We have to learn to pass through a long period of waiting before His word can be fulfilled. We have to wait for God to honour His word.

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See what the Lord said concerning Joseph:

Psalm 105:19 "Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him."

Evidently Joseph had received a promise from the Lord. But when he was imprisoned in a dungeon, his soul was bound, fettered and shackled, as it were, by iron chains. The word of the Lord tried Joseph. He wanted to come out of the dungeon where it seemed as if his soul had been held fast in unbreakable iron chains. He prayed repeatedly; his patience was tried again and again. The word of the Lord tried him and tested him until the word (of release) came from the Lord. This could be true for all of God's people.

In Philadelphia the church received the word of God and then they were tried by that word. As God's remnant, we have also received God's word; He has opened our eyes to have a vision of His purpose. But what we have received from Him must also be tried and tested in us. It is so sad that some people, having spent many years in this calling, still waver and vacillate in times of trial. Some are not able to stand the strain of waiting; they give up and withdraw. This means that though they had received a word from the Lord, they could not bear the trial of that word in their lives. **The church in Philadelphia did not give up the word that the Lord had given them. They held on to the word of the Lord through many difficulties and periods of darkness and reproach. Jesus confirmed that they had held on to the word of His patience that He had given them.**



May we cry out to the Lord for patience, endurance and perseverance to enable us to hold on to the word that He has given us. **That is what we must endure faithfully every day, through conditions of darkness, reproach, rejection, ill-speaking and lies.** The battle arises from problems within and without. How can we deny that which the Lord has opened our eyes to see? **We cannot deny the word given to us by the Lord, not because we are great people, but because it has been dropped into our innermost being by the Lord! It's a word in our bones!** How can we deny it? How can we say 'no' to that word? We need to hold on to the word of His patience. May God strengthen us! We need to hold on to the word of His patience, though grievous denunciations and rejections assail us. Allegations and lies may abound around us, but let me say to all those who are walking in this calling and vision, that the quality of His word is that it will always be fulfilled. Praise the Lord! For so says the prophet, *"For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."* (Habakkuk 2:3).

God's word will surely find its fulfillment in a people. **The question is whether we shall be part of that remnant company when His word is fulfilled. Will we experience it in our life?** Will we be a part of that remnant people who will fulfill it on that day? This is our challenge. God's word will be fulfilled and He will have a glorious bride; but when it is fulfilled upon the earth in a people, will we be a part of that church? That is the vital question that we all need to answer. Will I deviate? Will I compromise? Will I love the world? Will I go after prosperity? Will I go after

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the honour of men?

One thing will always be true: His word to us will be fulfilled in His time. The Lord told the Israelites that He had brought them out of Egypt to bring them into the Promised Land. Was that word fulfilled? Surely it was. That word was fulfilled when they crossed the river Jordan, though the generation that had heard that word was not there, barring Joshua and Caleb. When that word was fulfilled, the whole generation that had heard God's word for His people missed the experience of its reality in their lives. That is the sad truth. In a similar way, there are many brethren who began walking in this call and vision of God, but today, when that word is being progressively fulfilled in God's people in some measure, they are no longer here—they are not seen around.

We need to ask ourselves, "What is my future? Will I be there? Will I be alive when this Word that I have been hearing for many years, will be fulfilled in a people? Will my future know the reality of that Word?" Saints, how many of us will experience the fulfillment of His word in our lives? That is the challenge that each of us face. That is the issue before His remnant. Let us be encouraged in the love of the Lord by the fact that His word to us will never fail; it will never fall to the ground. Amen! May the Lord help us to overcome the accuser of the brethren, the enemy of our souls and the inveterate father of lies, by the word of His patience: for He who has promised it, is faithful to perform it.

Two churches out of seven kept the word of His patience, through darkness, discouragements, situations



and perplexities. They gave themselves to the word of His patience. The cry of my heart is that I would be a part of God's people when the word that He is speaking to us is fulfilled. And may that be the cry of all of us in this church! I am sure that as we keep the word of His patience and endure to the end, He shall come to us to say, "I have loved thee"!

We see a grand illustration and embodiment of this in the life of Daniel. He was faithful to God's word, although he was conscious of his own weakness. He was not a strong man but he had 'little strength' to maintain the testimony of the Lord.

Daniel 10:8 "Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength."

We see very clearly that Daniel was a weak man, without any great measure of strength. However, the Lord saw his heart of devotion and love towards God. This is the most significant factor here. It matters little if we are weak; what touches the Lord is whether our heart is strong for the Lord and for His purpose.

Daniel 10:9-11

9 Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground.

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10 And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands.

11 And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling.

The Lord called Daniel “a man greatly beloved”, because his strength lay in the Lord and his heart was toward God. When our heart is toward God, then the Lord becomes our strength. It is not our sufficiency, but His sufficiency that matters. Daniel held on to the Lord and God became his sufficiency. Daniel’s strength was in the Lord and he kept the word of the Lord. Daniel had read the Book of Jeremiah and knew that the captivity of Israel was to last for 70 years. He held on to that Word for a long time, by any standards. He had heard the word of the Lord and he held onto it in the face of all the difficulties that arose in Babylon. He did not let go of that word till it was fulfilled. He held on to the word that said that God would restore His people, that he would build the ruins of Jerusalem, and that He would restore that which was lost, after 70 years.

If ever there was a man who stood up to tremendous pressure to deny God’s name in those ancient days, it was Daniel (and his three brothers). In Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar considered himself to be the greatest of men. Everyone in that great city of Babylon bowed before the name of King Nebuchadnezzar. To choose to honour the Name of Jehovah was to choose to die, but Daniel did not deny the Lord’s



name! Nebuchadnezzar was a great name in the earth in those days, for he invaded and conquered country after country. His empire extended from one end of the oceans to the other, and his name was on the lips of every man. That was the situation in Persia when Daniel was ordered and pressurized to deny the name of the Lord and bow before the name of Nebuchadnezzar. In the midst of dire circumstances, Daniel and his Hebrew brothers steadfastly withstood the challenge to deny the Name of the Lord. The four of them held on to the name of the Lord and to His word of patience. Daniel was tried and tested for a long time, for he lived through five Persian kingdoms where several powerful kings ruled in the seventy-year- period. Powerful kings reigned and eventually perished; but because Daniel held on to the name of the Lord, he was able to wait for the word of the Lord to be fulfilled. It was a difficult time for Daniel—a long drawn-out time for the trial of his patience and faith. The last chapters of the Book of Daniel show that though he had grown old and weak, he did not yet deny the name of the Lord. He held on with perseverance through seventy years of the captivity of Israel, during which many things could have happened to him and his Hebrew brethren. Their patience was severely tried and tested. The fires could have destroyed them, the cruel Persians could have killed them, the palace guards could have poisoned them, and the lions could have devoured them. They could easily have complained and murmured, “When and where is the word of the Lord going to be fulfilled?” But they overcame such thoughts by submitting to God’s word. They knew that God’s word would eventually be fulfilled, and neither lions, nor fires, nor enemies could ever wound or negate the word of the Lord.

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See what the Lord said:

Daniel 10:18, 19

18 Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me,

19 And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me.

In other words, the Lord said to Daniel, “O greatly beloved Daniel, hold on; My word is going to be fulfilled”. What the Lord told Daniel was not very different from what the Lord said to the church in Philadelphia, “... I have loved thee.” Faithfulness is something to which the Lord is drawn to, again and again. They held on to the word of His patience through difficulties, distress and darkness. Let me warn you of one important thing. It is so easy to hold fast and be fearless when all goes well, but when things go wrong and you find yourself in the thick of enemy’s attacks in the form of reproaches, slander, ill-spoken allegations, and lies, it is then that you will begin to wonder whether the Lord is with you or not. That is the time to watch how you react to those circumstances. Then you will ask, “What shall I do with what God has spoken?” Will you throw His word away? Will you abandon His word? Search yourselves, saints of God.

When sailors in a ship encounter a heavy storm, they are supposed to jettison all heavy things into the swirling water to lighten the ships and increase their chances of



survival. When we enter into rough and stormy waters in our lives, do we jettison the word that God has given us? **Will we reject and abandon all that God has spoken to us in the Bible? Will we overlook His word to us, as given in the Books of Hebrews, Ephesians and Colossians?** What is your mentality? Do you think that the word you heard at one time in the past was good enough for your situations at that time, but now, in the reality of your present trials and conflicts, it does not seem to suffice? Is the word difficult to hold on to now? Would you be prepared to jettison His word because it looks insufficient for your present situation? Saints, many have done that. **Will you abandon that word of prophesy and patience that you heard earlier? Many have failed, because they wanted to escape and survive the difficult situations and circumstances through which they were passing.** They set aside the word and went the way of the world. At such times, Paul's remarks ring true: "How can I? Others may have, but I cannot. I was blind-- I did things against God and disobeyed him--, but He opened my eyes and gave me life. How can I now be disobedient to His word and His call?"

Is that not true for us who also were once blind and far from this call and vision? Will you also say like Paul said, "How can I desert Him?"? **Will you still hold on to the word you have believed, whatever the situation is or will be? Or will you jettison the things you have heard and believed, so that it would be easier for you to survive the pressures, conflicts and pains you are going through?**

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My prayer is that I may never abandon and reject the precious word that God has given to me for my survival in times of darkness and difficulties. Beloved, be sure that God will have a remnant company that will hold on to His word. It will only be a small company, a small representation; but it will stand and hold on to the supremacy of His name over every other name, whatever the cost. They would be willing to go all the way, enduring many difficulties, frustrations and problems, experiencing many closed doors, and yet holding on to the word of His patience, having faith that His word will find its fulfillment sooner or later. *That* is the ground where we ought to be standing upon.

The Lord is coming soon and He wants to find a faithful remnant, even if it be just a few members. God will then be able to say, "Your vindication will come... O, greatly beloved of the Lord... I have loved thee". Saints, is there anything more precious than to hear such words from our Lord?

May we give Him the ground to whisper His endearments to us as His remnant in these last days!





THE CALL OF THE REMNANT





c h a p t e r s e v e n

HOLDING FAST - TO HIS WORD



THE SPECIAL FEATURE OF THIS DAY

We praise God that through these meditations on the Book of Revelation, the Lord has opened our eyes to see what is upon the mind of God for His remnant or His overcomers in these days. As we have moved on in these meditations, we have seen that all those who have been open to His word have been able to experience an inward strengthening, edifying and cleansing in some measure. The Lord has also placed before us many challenges through these meditations. As we come to the conclusion of these meditations, let us pray that all that the Lord has enabled us to understand and grasp, will be firmly established in our inner man.

In the course of our meditations from the Book of

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Revelation, we have seen the way in which Apostle John suffered in order to stand for the Word and for His testimony while in the isle of Patmos. We have also seen how the faithful church at Smyrna suffered for the Word and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. The church at Philadelphia similarly was given to the Word and to the testimony of the Lord as mentioned in *Revelation 3:7-12*. The Lord ministered many things to us through these meditations; but as we come to an end of them, I am reminded by the Spirit to mention one special feature of our times.

Saints, the way and the walk of a believer is always narrow. But the narrowness and the difficulties we face are of special significance. There is a 'straitness' in our walk in the times in which we are living which calls for special attention. **The times ahead will be hard-pressing and challenging and we shall need to be strong-willed and determined to maintain the straitness and narrowness of this walk in Christ.** Jesus said, "*Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*" (*Matthew 7:13, 14*). After being delivered from Egypt, the majority of God's people in the wilderness desired that the narrow path be made broad and easy. They always wanted to broaden the way, and that is where they failed to meet the purpose of God. In the natural, they experienced the narrowness of the way when God brought them to places of hunger and thirst. They resisted God's will and constantly made an effort to have a broad way in the wilderness. Though there were some enlightened people in their midst who walked



through the strait gate and the narrow way with great faith and endurance, they were ill-treated, rejected and set aside by the majority who chose the broad way. The few who believed and embraced the strait gate and the narrow path were silenced by the majority.

The same thing is being repeated by the church-in-the-wilderness in the twenty-first century. **In the wilderness of our times, while every effort is being made by the majority of believers to make the gate broader and the way wider, there are just a few remnant believers who choose to walk through the strait gate and the narrow way in the face of many difficulties. The true remnant will be cast out, hindered, criticized, set aside and locked out; but they need to remain in the confines of the walls of His testimony.** Let us not be attracted by what others are doing. **There is a great temptation to take the easier path in the seasons of defections and compromises that are upon us, but we need to maintain the straitness of our walk in the path shown to us by the Lord.** May God help us to be watchful over our lives in these difficult times.

SAFETY IN THE HOUR OF TESTING AND TRIAL

In our earlier meditations on the Book of Revelation we saw how the church at Smyrna maintained a true stand on the word of the Lord and on His testimony. Moving further, let us now reflect upon the church in Philadelphia, which remained faithful to the Lord despite several difficulties and suffering.

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Revelation 3:7-8

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

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

See what the Lord told the church at Philadelphia, the people who had a little strength, who were weak but kept His word and did not deny His name, who held on to every promise that God had spoken to them,

Revelation 3:10 "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

Revelation 3:10 (Amplified) "Because you have guarded and kept My word of patient endurance [have held fast the lesson of My patience with the expectant endurance that I give you], I also will keep you [safe] from the hour of trial (testing) which is coming on the whole world to try those who dwell upon the earth."

We see that the Lord promises to keep His church from the hour of testing and trial that the whole world is going to face because they had guarded His word with patience and endurance. It is clear from this that there will be times of



trial, testing or tribulation that will come upon the whole world. The Lord tells His faithful church in advance, as a sort of foretelling, before the time came, that there will be times of severe strain and testing for the church. He tells this to His suffering church that had already experienced the severest of suffering for the sake of His name and testimony. The church in Philadelphia was given a promise of Divine protection. Even when a fire of tribulation would cover the whole earth, the Lord promised to keep His people safe. In those times of great darkness and terrible occurrences, the Lord's promise to them was that He would protect them and save them by His hand.

Saints of God, this word is prophetic for God's people in this day and age. How will the Lord save His church from times like that? It will not be by rapturing the church away! That is not how the church will be kept. Yet they shall be kept safe in the midst of the trials. The Lord will keep His church safe from the evil. The high priestly prayer of the Lord Jesus (Chapter 17 of John's Gospel) will be fulfilled. The Lord did not pray that His church be kept from all trials, but He prayed that the Father would keep them safe from evil. Let us be persuaded that the church in Philadelphia actually experienced the Lord's hand of protection upon them in a wonderful way, since that was the Lord's promise. The Lord's promise was not in vain; it was not an empty promise. Adam Clarke writes, "Many understand by the hour of temptation the persecution under Trajan, which was greater and more extensive than the preceding ones under Nero and Domitian." *Barnes' Notes* submits, "It may have been some form of persecution, or it may have been some calamity by disease, earthquake, or famine that was to occur.

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Tacitus mentions an earthquake that sank twelve cities in Asia Minor, in one night, by which, among others, Philadelphia was deeply affected; and it is possible that there may have been reference here to that overwhelming calamity." One thing is very clear, that when this prophetic word was fulfilled, the Lord must have surely preserved His faithful church according to His promise to them. May we truly accept the fact that the Lord will not promise to do something that He cannot or will not do. His word is enough. He will do it again for His church in the Last Days. This is His promise to every overcomer in these end-times.

How did the Lord keep them from that hour of testing? It was certainly not by rapturing them out of the world. They were kept safe in the midst of the trial.; they experienced the Lord's protecting hand in the midst of their tribulations. This is a word of encouragement to us too, for the Lord will similarly also keep us safe from evil in the midst of the great tribulation during the time of the Antichrist. He will keep us safe, just as He kept the church in Philadelphia safe from evil on the earth, even though we may have to suffer for His name's sake. Remember what the Lord Jesus said in *Matthew* 10:28-30 and *Luke* 21:18.

The Word says that a great fear will come upon God's people because of all that is happening, but that God will preserve and keep His people. We need to know in our hearts that He is faithful to keep His commitments. We shall go through many trials; but He will keep us from evil even in those times of darkness and distress, because we stand for His word and His testimony. Not one hair of our head will fall to the ground in those days, and therefore we



can rest in the promises of the Lord. We can trust in His word. *Revelation* 12 mentions that God has a place prepared for His church and the Lord will give His church wings (the strength of the Lord) and keep her under His protection. This will be done in a manner similar the account given in *Exodus* 19, where the Lord says that He carried His people on eagles' wings (*Exodus* 19:4 "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself").

The place of safety for His church will not be some physical or geographical place. It will be a spiritual place where we ought to be in the Lord. Naturally speaking, it would be wonderful if that place could be a geographical place; but that is not what is meant. It will be a spiritual place in Christ. It is not going to be a place where we go physically and abide in safety on that day of terrible trouble. It is a realm and a spiritual place. It is not going to be a place we can go to, just because we are believers and have been baptized. We cannot come into this place automatically by virtue of being members of this church or that church. But it is a place that we need to come into in Christ spiritually, in the days ahead by being given to the word of God and the spirit of His testimony. The Lord is preparing us so that we may not lose that place—a place which has been prepared for His Bride. She will be kept and preserved there, though many things will happen on the earth while she is there. This is very fascinating and exhilarating and involves a lot of typology, but we shall not get into that at present so that we can be obedient to the guidance of the Spirit.

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The Lord told the church at Philadelphia that the 'hour of testing' would come upon those who 'dwell upon the earth'. In other words, those who were going to be tested during the 'hour of testing' would be 'earth dwellers'. What does that signify? It speaks of those who have made the earth and earthly things their riches; they are those who pursue after wealth and seek the honour of men (vs. 10). This great trial will come upon those who have an earthly nature. The overcoming church cannot have an earthly nature or be earth-minded in any manner. The Bible says we are seated in heavenly places: we are to keep our mind on things which are above and not upon the things of this earth.

Trials and tribulation will come upon the whole world, but mainly upon those who are earth-dwellers. What do we mean by this? By this we mean those whose minds are always occupied with earthly and not heavenly things, will face the brunt of the horror during the period of the tribulation. Such people will be caught up with riches, money and prosperity. They will cherish the desire and order of men, in matters of their careers, professions, wealth and possessions. A great tribulation will come upon them. God's remnant must be cleansed by the Word from those earthly things such as the honour, the fame, the name, and the properties that mundane men seek after. There are so many things going on in this sphere today.

HOLDING FAST TO THE HEAVENLIES

An overcomer is not an earth-dweller, for he or



she overcomes earth-mindedness and earth-dwelling.

We can overcome only when the mind is set upon things above. That is the challenge before us. If we are caught up with earthly things only, then we fail to qualify as God's overcomers. Look at all that is happening in the world today! People are caught up with materialism, covetousness and greed, which strangulate and govern many areas of their lives. Our jobs, our family life-styles, our attitudes and much else have lost their rightness because of the spirit of avarice, greediness and possessiveness. People are jumping from one job to another for better pay and perks; women are striving to work in offices when their homes and children are left to the care of others; some people are working on two jobs so that they can have more money to buy more comforts, more amenities, more welfare it is an endless rat-race for an earthly realm of things! There is a rat-race for owning things: for better cars, better possessions, more time for luxuries and fun O the list is endless. The sad thing is that even believers are moving into this life-style of acquiring earthly things. This is what Apostle Paul says in his letter to Timothy: *"You may as well know this too, Timothy, that in the last days it is going to be very difficult to be a Christian. For people will love only themselves and their money; they will be proud and boastful, sneering at God, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful to them, and thoroughly bad. (2 Timothy 3:1-2 Living Bible).* **How true this is! Apostle Paul saw the condition of our times by the Spirit right in the first century!**

Saints, we should not to be caught up with earthly things and earthly attitudes, even though we may find our dear and near relatives and other Spirit-filled believers indulging

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in earthly goings-on. Many believers have become earth-bound in their daily life. Saints, our minds are to be on that which is spiritual and heavenly. The Lord wants His church to hold fast to what is heavenly and eternal, to the word of His patience, so that the word would be fulfilled in our lives despite our spiritual poverty. We are not to waste our lives on these temporal earthly things. We are to be a people who are spiritually rich on the earth at this time, and even more when He returns. That is what we are to hold on to. We have to be very careful how we live in these days. Thank God that He is sending His Word into our lives. **Remember, an overcomer will never be an earth-dweller, for his mind will be set on the things that are above.**

Revelation 3:11 "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

Revelation 3:11 (Amplified) "I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one may rob you and deprive you of your crown."

What a word to His church! We are to hold fast to what we have, to what God has given to us—those spiritual, heavenly and eternal things. Until He returns, we are to hold fast to the word of His patience, His spiritual counsels, and those things that God has deposited in us. This we must do, so that no one can rob or deprive us of our crowns. That is the call for the overcomers.

If we fail to hold fast to those things which God has given us, which are eternal, spiritual and heavenly, then we may miss that crown which we are to receive at the coming



of the Lord. Those who are not holding fast to those things He has given, will suffer a loss when He comes again. At the coming of the Lord, there will be a loss to those who are not faithfully holding fast to His word and His testimony. It is possible, therefore, for someone else to get that crown that was meant for us. Now let us not get into what the crown will be, for that is not the burden today. Think of the loss that we could incur, if we are not holding fast to the things of the Lord. **That which is yours may be taken by another! God has purposed a walk and a life for you—and at the end there will be a crown. If you and I are found unfaithful in fulfilling that purpose to which He has called us and opened our eyes to see, we shall lose that crown.** However, if we fail, God will raise someone else to complete that walk and he or she will get the crown which was meant for you and me. **What a loss that will be!** This is what the Lord said to the church in Philadelphia. This is God's word for His remnant church today as well. There is a real possibility of our losing out. Therefore, saints, let us be very vigilant, watchful and careful.

In passing, let me share the example of Judas, who had a great privilege to be a disciple of the Lord. But he was unfaithful to that call. He messed up his life and missed what God had given him. Someone else took Judas' place, and it could well be that Paul the apostle filled the vacancy and received a crown in addition to his own! So it may well be said that Paul not only had his own crown, but also that which Judas missed!

It is very clear that if we do not hold fast to that which is committed to us by the Lord, then we may experience

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some loss. If we are not holding fast to whatever God has committed to us, as individuals and as a church, then there will be losses to bear. And in our place someone else will receive what we would have received, had we been faithful. Therefore, we all need to be faithful and sensitive and hold fast to the Word. We cannot afford to take it easy at any time; we are to hold fast to what God has done in our lives. We need to be watchful to ensure that nothing neutralizes our commitment unto the Lord, individually as well as corporately, as a part of His body. The word of the Lord is to hold fast so that we don't miss what God has intended for us at the end of this race.

PILLARS IN GOD'S HOUSE

Revelation 3:12,13

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

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

Revelation 3:12,13 (Amplified)

12 He who overcomes (is victorious), I will make him a pillar in the sanctuary of My God; he shall never be put



out of it or go out of it, and I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which descends from My God out of heaven, and My own new name. [Isaiah 62:2; Ezekiel 48:35.]

13 He who can hear, let him listen to and heed what the Spirit says to the assemblies (churches).

In verse 12, the Lord says that an overcomer shall never be put out of His sanctuary! The Lord got me to meditate over this for a good period of time. This essentially talks about permanency in the house of God. The overcomer will be made a permanent pillar in the church. Naturally, the strength of a house rests upon the pillars that support it. This is true for the house of God, the church, as well. Pillars are designed to support the whole house, and therefore, 'they' have a very important place in the house of the Lord. **The Lord will make an overcomer, a victorious believer, a pillar in His House.** Today many spiritual houses are collapsing because their pillars were not set and established by God.

Concerning His house, the Lord says that He alone will build and erect 'the pillars' of His sanctuary. The Lord will make as pillars in His house such persons whose hearts are steadfast and not shifty or wavering. Their heart will be set upon overcoming every situation. They will be willing to pay the highest cost. The Lord will watch over such ones, and therefore, He says that they will not be put out of the sanctuary; neither will they go out or leave it. They will be as permanent fixtures. **Another characteristic of such 'pillars' is that they will not only support 'the building',**

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but they will bear the burdens of other brothers and sisters. This is a much desired need in the house of the Lord today. It is a sad thing that saints have become a burden to the local church, rather than being burden-bearers in the body of Christ. Even after many years in the local church some people continue to be a burden in the house instead of being burden-bearers. They do not qualify to be pillars in God's house, pillars that truly support the house in every way.

It is indeed sad that even after many years in the house of God, some believers are not able to qualify to be pillars in His house. This is primarily because they continue to give themselves to the ways of the natural man. They are not able to overcome the desires of the flesh in any significant measure. Beloved, God expects each and every believer to be a pillar in the house of God. Therefore, our hearts should be set to overcome our natural instincts and desires. Overcomers in God's house must always provide strong support to others in the house; they impart strength to the house. Those brothers and sisters who are living an overcoming, victorious life are a source of spiritual might and muscle in the house. They may not be preachers or teachers, but they can be pillars that strengthen the church. Those who are not overcomers have an opposite effect in the house: they become a burden to the church or God's house. There is a great need for 'pillars' in every local church.

Are you a burden-bearer or are you a burden to the local church? Are you unstable and shaky? Is your spiritual foundation weak or feeble? Does the natural man dominate your activities? There is a great need today for



overcomers who are able to take the place of pillars in God's house!

The Lord says in verse 12, *"I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem."* The Lord will inscribe His name upon the overcomer. As we know, the name speaks about one's nature. The name *Jacob*, for instance, means supplanter, cheater, defrauder and deceiver. This is the kind of person Jacob was. Similarly, we know that our Saviour was given the name 'Jesus' because it means, 'He would save His people'. So when the Word says that the true overcomer will bear a new name when the Lord returns, it talks of the impartation of a new nature! How will this be done? This shall be the work of God's grace upon overcomers who are sensitive to the workings of the Spirit.

These are the days when the Lord will do the work of inscribing His nature upon our lives! Though we shall be rejected, despised and criticized for the sake of His name in this world, **we are to remain faithful to our call in this hour and subject our lives to the Father's will. Overcomers will be identified as those who are whole-hearted disciples of the Lord.** God's overcomers will be honoured by the Lord when He returns. The Bride-nature that God wants His overcomers to possess will be the very nature of their Lord! The symbolic name of the Bride is New Jerusalem. In verse 12, we see the emphasis of the Lord on His determination to perform a transforming work in His church in these last days. May the Spirit encourage us to take this seriously!

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Saints, in our meditations, we have seen how the Lord maintained His name and testimony and preserved His word through His remnant in an hour of terrible decline and downward trend. **The Book of Revelation comes to us as a prophetic word which has been taking place and progressing for the past twenty centuries!** And it is happening even in our times! May we give ear to the voice that says, *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”*

THE LAODICEAN SPIRIT OF THIS AGE

In the Book of Revelation, mention is made of five churches that had several negative qualities. The Lord therefore reproveth and challenged them to overcome their weaknesses. However, as regard the last of the five churches, namely, the church in Laodicea, something terrible has been revealed. I do not know whether you have observed it or not, but my prayer is that the Holy Spirit may help you to see that which is seen as something quite horrific.

When the Lord spoke to four churches, He first pointed out their good qualities — their zeal, their works, their patience and so on. The Lord could still see something good in these four churches. But in the church at Laodicea, the Lord could see nothing to appreciate. His eyes did not behold anything positive in this church! It is very alarming indeed! One wonders why this church could not attract any appreciation from the Lord. The reason is that this church had deteriorated to a terribly low state. Their degeneration



was so extreme that the body had not only died, but it had begun to decay and stink. The Lord had identified this church as being lukewarm and proud! The cause of their spiritual death was that it had been lukewarm and filled with spiritual pride!

Prophetically speaking, the seven churches in the Book of Revelation represent the Lord's churches at different ages in the past twenty centuries. This is something that has been acknowledged by most Biblical scholars and teachers. Let me explain this to emphasize the terrible times in which we are living. The church in Ephesus signifies the late Apostolic Age; the church in Smyrna, the poor (but rich) church that did not receive any reproof, speaks prophetically of the early centuries of persecution. Pergamum, where stood the church with bad surroundings, speaks of the Age of Constantine and the times of temporal prosperity. Thyatira, the church of the evil prophetess, denotes the Age of Papal Apostasy. Sardis, the dying church, points to the Middle Ages; Philadelphia, the weak but loyal church, signifies the period of Reformation from Luther's times. And finally Laodicea, the 'rich' but poor church speaks of the Last Days. **The church in this day and age in which we live, is represented by the Laodicean church. In other words, we are living in the Laodicean age. The characteristic of this age is lukewarm being neither hot nor cold. It talks of a time when there is nothing positive, nothing admirable, and nothing commendable before the Lord.** O how careful we ought to be in our lives, because we are a part of that terrible age.

The church in this age is become sterile because

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of her union with the world. She is drinking from the cisterns that have been polluted. She has great potential like radio, TV, Internet and all kinds of electronic media to do the work of the Lord. We feel so tremendously impressed with the potential of this hour. Yet we know what she has produced. **Today's church doesn't want to become the subject of scandal or reproach.** They do not want to be a reproach in the world! **There is no cross working in several areas of self-life, worldly passions and self-will.** Certain things become very convenient because, in the pretext of winning souls, they can meet the demands of the flesh and self. They can avoid the scandal of the cross. **They eliminate the instrument of death that God hath ordained for smiting their carnal nature.** The spirit of compromise has conquered the people of God including spiritual leaders. **Their lukewarm condition does not give any strength to resist or to stand up against false teachings, and perverted interpretations and practices coming into the church. Everything is accommodated.** No wonder, the Lord has nothing to really appreciate or positive to commend about her today. These are signs of the Laodicean age.

Saints, we are living in the Laodicean age. **God's people are blind, yet they insist that they see.** That is the tragedy of our times. **That leaves His people totally helpless and immune to any offer of help from the Lord. A Laodicean church cannot proclaim the Kingdom Gospel of God's eternal purpose. Her agenda today is to accumulate the earth's resources, get more and more involved in the world's economics, politics, and**



governments. She is in pursuit of a comfortable life and prosperity here on the earth. **Her status today is a church which is “rich and increased with goods...have need of nothing”**

This is a warning to God’s overcomers to never be lukewarm, to never harbor any pride in their hearts, and instead to be utter and uncompromising in all spiritual matters. May the Lord deliver us from the spirit of this present age: the Laodecean spirit!

A FINAL WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT

As we come to the close of these meditations, the Holy Spirit has burdened me to share a specific burden to the church. Saints, none of the leaders of the five churches mentioned in the Book of Revelation were aware of the true spiritual condition of their churches. **They were not only unaware of the true condition of their own lives, they even had no spiritual intelligence concerning the spiritual state of the churches they led. All of them suffered from a sense of complacency and self-satisfaction. They had a high opinion about themselves and their churches.** Perhaps others also had high opinion about them. They could not hear what the Lord had to say to them, because they were not open to the Holy Spirit.

Saints, if we walk according to our own ideas, judgments, evaluations and opinions, or even by the appreciations and opinions of other people, then it will be

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difficult for us to hear the Lord our God. **The leaders of the five churches in the Book of Revelation were not open to the ministrations of the Spirit and were caught up with their ministry, their work, their missions, their plans and programmes. They were so busy preparing messages for others that they could not receive a message from the Lord!** What a dangerous place they were in? They were running 'the show', 'the ministry', and 'the organization'. They thought that they were reaching out to others with what they had received from the Lord, but they had no time to hear the voice of the Spirit in their lives. They could not hear what the Spirit had to say to the churches. **They were not available to the Lord to see their own need! This tragedy can happen to those who are complacent and are so caught up with their work.** Hence, they could not be freed from the things of the flesh and the self. Here is a warning for every true disciple of the Lord in these last days:

Ecclesiastes 4:13 " Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished."

Ecclesiastes 4:13 (Amplified) "Better is a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who no longer knows how to receive counsel (friendly reproof and warning)—"

Most of the leaders of these churches in *Revelation* felt that they held venerated appointments and positions as leaders; they felt that the anointing upon their ministry was a permanent matter, something they could hold on to



despite the condition of their personal lives. That is a dangerous place to be in. I have met men who thought they would never lose their anointing because they had been placed in the church by the Lord! In the first century, we see that the leaders of the church were not elected by the people or chosen by a selection board or a governing body. The placement of leaders in the early churches was not like what we have in most churches today: the leaders were appointed of God like Paul and the other apostles. This was the pattern throughout the early church, right till the beginning of the second century. The leaders were spiritual giants in comparison to the leaders of today. Be that as it may, it is not difficult to see that the thought of losing their anointing would not have crossed their mind. So, even though they were great leaders, pride set in and they became spiritually defunct. In time, they became lukewarm; they compromised with the world; their pride became a stumbling block. Pride brought them to a place of spiritual hardness, where they could not hear the Lord. They could not even scrutinize and measure their lives in the light of the reality of the Word. They felt their lives were readily acceptable, looking at their status, their positions and the honour that others gave them. In a sense, they were blinded and lost their ability to hear the Spirit, as happened to King Saul in the Old Testament. Remember, King Saul had a good and humble beginning, but finally lost his anointing and the kingdom as well. This is what is happening in many churches. Spiritual understanding is very different from natural understanding. That is why it can happen that we hear the Word, but miss the Voice! Apostle Paul realized how careful he needed to be, for he said in *1 Corinthians 9:27*, "But I keep under my body, and

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bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Paul realized that God had no favorites. He also warned Timothy to watch over his own life first, so that he would be able to experience salvation in every aspect of his life which was not like that of Christ, and only then in turn would he be able to lead others to such a salvation as well.

1 Timothy 4:16 "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."

Another translation says, *"Keep a critical eye upon yourself and what you teach, Timothy. That will save you and others who hear you."*

Paul not only wrote thus to Timothy, but he spoke the same words of warning to the elders in Ephesus in Acts 20. He called them to Miletus and told them to take heed to themselves and the flock.

Acts 20:28 "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

Saints, this is the responsibility of every leader and every member in the church : to be open to the Spirit of God and never to allow pride to come in, and also to be always open for correction. If you are open to the Spirit, you are sure to receive His help. If you are not open, the Lord may move someone's heart to tell you what needs to



be corrected. May the Lord give you the grace to be open to that correction from someone else!

Ecclesiastes 9:8 "Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment."

Ecclesiastes 9:8 (Amplified) "Let your garments be always white [with purity], and let your head not lack [the] oil [of gladness]."

We see a link here between purity and anointing! In these five churches, the leaders were so busy preparing Bible studies and messages that they missed the voice of the Lord. **The Lord wanted to speak to them directly, but they did not have listening ears.** Finally, the Lord had to speak through the Apostle John, who had to write them a letter. John could hear the voice of the Lord as of a trumpet; and through him the word of the Lord came to the early churches. **The Lord be thanked, there was at least a John who could hear His voice!** The Lord gave the churches several warnings and offered them several challenges. And despite their failures, the Lord gave them one last warning to repent. It was God's great mercy to give them another chance to repent.

In contrast, we see two churches that were so different from the five churches. In the midst of decline, degeneration and departure, we see that they were some faithful messengers (leaders) and churches. They kept their lives open to the Word and to the voice of the Lord. They dealt with their pride in every possible way, never allowing pride to raise its ugly head. In the midst of negative circumstances

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and compromises, these messengers (leaders) stood firm, suffered, but never compromised. And so were the believers also strengthened. They judged themselves; they were open to the Holy Spirit and the word that God had been speaking; and they cleansed themselves of the filthiness of the flesh and the spirit. As God's remnant in these terrible times, what an encouragement this is for us today!

2Corinthians 7:1 0 "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

The churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia separated themselves and cleansed themselves from every impurity of the flesh and the spirit. They cleansed themselves by being available to the Spirit of God. If we are tuned to the Spirit, we will not be confused however much men may argue. The Holy Spirit will unveil the Word to us. **The Spirit and the Word are always in agreement and union.** That is what the Bible shows us from the beginning. God created the whole world in the beginning by the Word and the Spirit. That is how we were born again—the Spirit using the Word. That is how the church will be brought to the place of being without spot and wrinkle. It will be by the Word and the Spirit. Saints, there will be no confusion in your understanding if you are open to the Spirit. Many people may argue and debate with you, but you will know the truth because the Spirit has opened your eyes. That is what happened to these two churches.



In the first Epistle of Peter we read, it is time for the judgment of God to begin with the house of God (1 Peter 4:17), meaning God's judgment begins with us (His house) first. If it is to begin with us first, with the church first, then we must always be in a place of examining ourselves. It means that we must all be open to the Spirit. **The mark of a true house of God is to continually judge ourselves first with the help of the Holy Spirit.** God is giving us the opportunity to judge ourselves constantly. The Lord is giving us a privilege to judge ourselves. The Word says if we judge ourselves, then we will not be judged by God. It is a blessed privilege to be open to the Lord's evaluations and opinions now, before it is too late. If we are open to the Spirit, we shall not be judged or left to be judged with others. Every time we hear the Word and the Spirit, let us open our lives to the Lord. That is what God is looking for. **The Lord looked upon these two churches specifically; but He did not rebuke them because the leaders and saints were open to the Spirit. These two churches examined themselves so that they might not be judged. Can this happen with us?** They did not go by what the majority of believers around them were doing.

Beloved, the true overcomers, the remnant of God, will be those who arrest any kind of a downward tendency and negative trend in their own lives, first of all. They are not a special breed of believers; they have the same failures and weaknesses that others have, but they overcome them. They have the same common trend of the natural man within, but they recognize that their calling is different. **They still have the same tendencies to compromise, to backslide as seen in others, but they**

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overcome. They take every remedial measure; they seek the face of God; they come to the house of God and they stand up to those negative things and die to them. Thus they crucify the flesh and arrest that downward trend. Saints, we are to overcome as He overcame

John 16:33 "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

Beloved saints, the life of people in the churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia has challenged my life and ministered to me very deeply. **Praise God that on the Day of Judgment, there will be a people who will have nothing in them that needs to be judged, just as those in the two churches in Revelation.** That is our calling — to be a testimony of Jesus Christ in this present hour. We are called to continue to hold on to the Word of patience until His coming. In the midst of this downward trend, departure and compromise, our calling as individuals and as the body of Christ in this hour and time, is to stand for His word and His testimony.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches!



