

## Revelation 2

**Read Revelation 2:1-7:** The first of the seven churches addressed is the church of Ephesus. The church had become surrounded by false believers. Satan can attack us by intimidation; or by sending moles into the organization to take over from the inside. There is a certain protocol to putting anyone into a position of influence. A couple quick tips are as follows:

- Never choose someone who talks about themselves. It is about God and others
- Never choose someone who is doing it without salt. This means that there is no gentleness of the Holy Spirit and love in their demeanor.
- Choose people who glorify God pro-actively. Do not glorify the satellites' like the church, other leaders, study materials, commentaries, works or ministries, etc..
- False prophets tell you what you want to hear.
- The world has a different communication than the church. Sometimes you can know that a person is a Christian before they tell you.

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.  
Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. (1 John 4:1-11)

Originally Paul wrote the epistle of Ephesians to instruct them in their identity in Christ as individuals; and as a body of believers. He described their differences in heritage and socio-economic places as being insignificant. Unity in the Holy Spirit should be their focus. Now; years later the church is making an all-out effort to hang in there. In doing so; they have stopped doing it as an act of worship. Worship is one of the most-important parts of our faith.

But You are holy, Enthroned in the praises of Israel. (Psalm 22:3)

The Ephesians have turned into determined gate keepers. God does not just want a lampstand to reveal men organized to be good scouts or be an outward model. He wants relationship and conversation with him. Anything can become a job.

God gives them encouragement for their effort and zeal to remain true and free of pretenders. In the beginning it was all about Jesus. Now it was all about holding fast to their posts. One difference in between faith and religion is our focus. Are we engaged in lengthy and pleasurable prayer, and meditation on the word? The facilities preparations, administrative work and other support functions are needed; but they are not what brings fellowship with God. Religion and the religious right can be all about what you are committed to or what you hate. Faith is about what you love.

All seven churches have something to overcome. We do too. How do religious zealots turn back into loving and worshipful lights in this world? Jesus tells us to repent. We must turn around; and ask God to forgive us and help us fall back into love with him. Our quiet times are key factors.

she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:39-42)

**Read Revelation 2:8-11:** The next letter is to the church at Smyrna. This is a situation where God is ministering to the faithful at the valley of death. Fear is paralyzing and debilitating. How do you calm someone down knowing their unpleasant fate is sealed? What is the purpose of martyrdom and troubles? For some reason; we all need it to **mature in our faith.** Ironically, tribulations and

tests ultimately are what give us **peace**. Our grasp onto possessions and things which cannot deliver us put our expectations and confidences in things that keep dissolving. By dissolving our false gods; we turn to rely upon the real God. Like magnates; we continuously keep pulling things into our lives that we come to build false expectations on. We have to let go to ever **be free**.

Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” (John 16:32-33)

Jesus begins by describing himself as the one who is on the other side of human mortality. The church does not have much to hang on to. They have either lost it; or never had it. That can be a blessing to be detached from earthly holdings.

What do we obtain (other than peace) from enduring losses? **It stops us from sinning.**

...he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. (1 Peter 4:1-2)

Suffering and mortality also produces **a sense of immediacy**. People faced with death will frequently take inventory of their lives; and endeavor to get things squared away. At some point we have to do more than agree to do things. We have to step out.

But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.” Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1 Peter 4:7-10)

Apart from troubles; we get wrapped up in our daily involvements. Something needs to break the cycle of attending to our stuff. If we do not shed our burdens God will shed them off of our back. A tribulation may be nothing more than the jolt required to shed a burden or habit. Oddly; we try to throw them back on our backs.

...but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, (Philippians 2:8-13)

Smyrna has phony followers too. It can be hard to tell the difference. The ultimate test is to see what happens when sacrifice is required to remain faithful.

Sometimes financial hardship can separate the posers from those who trust God. Life and death situations are the ultimate test. Prison is a horrible place. Paul and John wrote much of the New Testament during their incarceration. To be wrapped up in our day-to-day stuff strangles our spirit. It is like the walking dead. If we don't set down what hurts us; God will mercifully remove it through other means.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. (Romans 8:5-19)

**Read Revelation 2:12-17:** Pergamos was a church in a very dark area. It would be like the church of San Francisco, Amsterdam or Bangkok. God can save his believers amidst people posing as true believers. God uses a two-edged sword; which is used in close-proximity (man to man) fighting. God sees all; and nobody gets to blend in. Lot was a perfect example.

Then the men said to Lot, “Have you anyone else here? Son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whomever you have in the city—take *them* out of this place! For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown great before the face of the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to destroy it.” (Genesis 19:12-13)

There are other examples of sole survivors of the faith amidst a faithless generation. There is common grace and also grace that comes with the faithful few. Ultimately, God cuts in between his own; and the unbelievers.

Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver *only* themselves by their righteousness,” says the Lord GOD. “If I cause wild beasts to pass through the land, and they empty it, and make it so desolate that no man may pass through because of the beasts, *even though* these three men *were* in it, *as I live*,” says the Lord GOD, “they would deliver neither sons nor daughters; only they would be delivered, and the land would be desolate. “Or if I bring a sword on that land, and say, ‘Sword, go through the land,’ and I cut off man and beast from it, *even though* these three men *were* in it, *as I live*,” says the Lord GOD, “they would deliver neither sons nor daughters, but only they themselves would be delivered. (Ezekiel 14:14-18)

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” (Matthew 3:11-12)

The doctrine of Balaam is to consider financial rewards in spiritual matters. Money always ruins it. You have to let money come. What is practical financially conflicts with steps of faith at times. Nicolaitans means destruction of people. It is believed that they brought fornication and idolatrous practices of the flesh into the church.

The white stone and hidden things of God speak to our secret identity to God. We can fool each other; but we cannot fool God.

**Read Revelation 2:18-29:** Thyatira got caught up in sexual sin. This could be compared to the final church that is outwardly doing well; except for internet pornography. God will burn whatever is not of eternal value.