

EMMAUS BIBLE COLLEGE • SUMMER 2010

Journey



The Seven Churches of Revelation

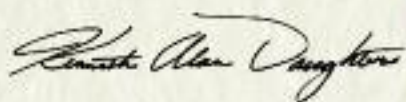
Helping Each Other Train the Next Generation

In late May and early June Emmaus welcomed to its campus more than 50 college presidents and leaders of brethren training centers from around the world. This International Training Consultation, called Dubuque 2, attracted leaders from such countries as Albania, Angola, Australia, Bolivia, Canada, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Madagascar, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Portugal, Rwanda, South Korea, Tanzania, United Kingdom, United States, and Zambia. It built on the success of a previous conference held on our campus five years ago. The purpose was to fellowship, network, and exchange helpful information regarding curricula, methods, content, and management of our schools and colleges.

It is surprising and encouraging to realize how many Bible training centers there are among the brethren worldwide! They range from accredited colleges offering degrees to small church-based training centers. What we all have in common is the desire to see the gospel spread and new assemblies planted. We see a hunger among our students to study the Bible and prepare for service. The need for well-educated and trained leaders among the next generation is universal. We felt a brotherhood in Christ and a strong desire to help each other.

We have been sharing ideas and resources with each other, including personnel.

What may be surprising to some is that we have so many Bible schools among the brethren throughout the world. Some brethren are ambivalent regarding formal training, but others are hostile. They may believe that Bible colleges are undesirable. It is understandable that a suspicion of intellectualism could grow out of a fear of the liberalism of many theological schools. We also share a belief that we can and should learn directly from God and study on our own. Yes, we have the Holy Spirit to guide us, but He has also given teachers to the church to help us learn His Word. We believe in the autonomy of the local church, and good teaching should take place there, but even the apostle Paul had his School of Tyrannus. The founders of our movement were scholars and professionals, such as Darby, Kelly, Bellett, Tregelles, and Wigram. This International Consultation demonstrated that brethren throughout the world realize the need for Bible colleges and training centers where future leaders can receive the grounding they need to do great work for God.



Kenneth Alan Daughters
President,
Emmaus Bible College



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Travel Guides



Has Christianity Failed You?

Ravi Zacharias
Zondervan, 2010

Has Christianity Failed You? is for you if you have struggled to understand what exactly it is you believe. Acclaimed apologist Ravi Zacharias explores the hard questions about what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. In his landmark new audio book on CD, he addresses the struggle he hears from both skeptics and Christians: Has Christianity failed us? And can irrefutable charges be brought against it by skeptics and disappointed believers alike?

The Seven Churches of Asia

Robert E. Surgenor
Gospel Folio Press

Unlike most books on this subject, rather than expound the prophetic picture the seven churches convey, the author takes the reader on a guided tour of these churches to view them as they were in actual life, and what the Lord had to say to each one of them. This book is very practical and challenging to Christians relative to godly living in our day of departure.

This I Believe

Donald Norbie
Gospel Folio Press

It is important for new Christians to spend valuable time in the personal study of God's Word. Instructions needed for daily living, church life, worship, witness, and service will be found in the careful study of the Scriptures. In this book, Donald Norbie outlines principles and doctrines he found in God's Word, which he has studied since he was a teenager. As you read through this book you will have the opportunity to get instructions and guidance from a man who has devoted much of his life to personal study and the teaching of believers following their personal acceptance of the Lord Jesus as Savior. Readers are reminded to "test all things, hold fast what is good." We are encouraged to test all by the Word of the living God (2 Tim. 3:14-17).

The Glory of God (Theology in Community)

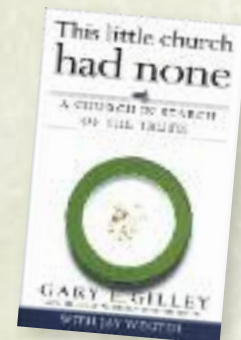
Christopher W. Morgan, Robert A. Peterson
Crossway, 2010

This full treatment of the glory of God will bring rich understanding and application of this central doctrine to the body of Christ. The Glory of God is the second volume in the Theology in Community series, which uses sound biblical doctrine to carefully examine important theological issues. While substantial in theological content, books in this series are widely accessible and coherent. In this volume, Köstenberger, Longman, Gaffin, and others guide readers through the glory of God in the Old and New Testaments and Johannine and Pauline literature. The doctrine is traced in historical theology, applied in pastoral theology, and fully delineated in a concluding systematic theology. College seniors, pastors, seminarians, and educated laypersons will find this book enormously useful in their personal studies and ministries.

This Little Church Had None: A Church in Search of the Truth

Gary E. Gilley with Jay Wegter
EP Books, 2009

Paul informs us in Romans 1:19-23 man's problem is that he has suppressed the truth about God revealed in the creation around him. This suppression has led to darkened hearts and imaginations empty of spiritual reality. Man tries to fill in the blanks with whatever might be in vogue at the moment—in biblical times it was idols and the direct conscious worship of creation. Today it might be New Age philosophy; Eastern religions; human achievement; humanistic theory; modernistic certainty; postmodern uncertainty; or any number of other theories. Bottom line: mankind has rejected God and His truth and suffers the consequences of that choice as God hands him over to enslavement by his own worldview with its resulting sins (1:24-32). It is no wonder people are disillusioned with life; sin and false beliefs ultimately have that effect.



God's Performance Review of the Seven Churches

R.P. Daniel
Believers Bookshelf, 2006

We all are rated on our performance, whether by report card in school or performance review at work. In Revelation 2 and 3, the Lord gives remarkable performance reviews to seven local churches, uncovering what was really going on behind the scenes. Do you want to know if the actions and attitudes seen in the local church where you fellowship please the Lord? Then read this book! An appendix seeks to prove that every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has eternal security.

You've Got Mail: A Study of the Seven Churches in Revelation

Malcolm White
Twoedged Sword Publications, 2007

In chapters 2 and 3 of the Revelation of John, Jesus looks at a tiny group of seven churches in the Roman province of Asia. We know from the letters Jesus wrote to these churches what He thought about each congregation, and it is believed that here in these letters, through the commendations, condemnations, and challenges Christ brings to each church, our Lord was giving a heavenly blueprint as to how He expected the church, His body, to be. Malcolm White's *You've Got Mail* takes the reader verse by verse through the seven letters, giving a deeper insight into life in each of the churches through the history of the cities they are found in. This presents not only a clearer understanding of each church and the relevance of Christ's message to them, but also of the relevance and application of these letters to our personal lives and churches today.

A Pictorial Guide to the Seven Churches of the Apocalypse and Island of Patmos

Donald F. Evans and Robert L. Clowers

This edition provides one of the best pictorial guides available on the seven churches in Revelation, from the Island of Patmos, where John saw his vision, around the Ring Road to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and finally to Laodicea.

The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting

Colin J Hemer
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000

This modern classic by Colin Hemer explores the seven letters in the book of Revelation against the historical background of the churches to which they were addressed. Based on literary, epigraphical, and archaeological sources and informed by Hemer's firsthand knowledge of the biblical sites, this superb study presents a clear picture of the New Testament world in the latter part of the first century and its significance for broader questions of church history.

No Other Foundation: An Exposition of Acts 2:42

Sam Thorpe, Jr.
ECS Ministries, 2010

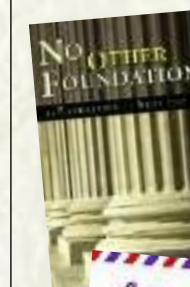
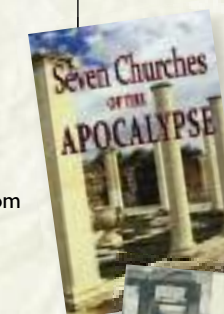
The premise of this book is that the activities recorded in Acts 2:42—the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers—comprised the foundation on which the church was built in the first century, and that these foundational principles still work in any generation, culture, or country. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

Letters Missionaries Never Write

Frederick L. Kosin
ECS Ministries, 2010

This book is a collection of letters missionaries do not write—and are not expected to write. As Christians we expect missionaries to write about thrilling opportunities and amazing conversions—and yet leave unsaid their own personal feelings and struggles. The letters included here will help you see missionaries as real people who face real problems, frustrations, and challenges . . . all while serving cross-culturally. Start reading and then start praying more effectively for these men and women serving the Lord.

To order contact John Rush at the Emmaus Bible College Library
(jrush@emmaus.edu or 563-588-8000 ext. 1003)



Which is your church?

Revelation 2:1 - 3:22

Message to Ephesus

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: 'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. 'But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 'Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place-- unless you repent. 'Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'

Message to Smyrna

"And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this: 'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.'

Message to Pergamum

"And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this: 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. 'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. 'So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 'Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what

the Spirit says to the churches To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

Message to Thyatira

"And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this: 'I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first. 'But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 'I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. 'Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. 'And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds. 'But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them--I place no other burden on you. 'Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come. 'He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received authority from My Father; and I will give him the morning star. 29'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

Message to Sardis

"To the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. 'Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. 'So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you. 'But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. 'He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I

will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

Message to Philadelphia

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this: 'I know your deeds Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name. 'Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie--I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you. 'Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. 'I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. 'He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

Message to Laodicea

"To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. 'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. 'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

FIRST CALLED CHRISTIANS IN ANTIOCH:

THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH

Acts 11:19-30; 13:1-4

By David Glock

There is no apostolic epistle to the church at Antioch of Syria! Letters from apostles usually arise out of some problem—like the first steps of disunity at Philippi, to the “other gospel” of Judaistic legalism of the Galatian churches. (That other “Antioch” was one of the Galatian churches.) Antioch was the seat of the Roman proconsul of Syria and a flourishing Gentile city. It became a notable city in the history of the church because “the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” and that’s our name!

They were first called Christians because they imitated the characteristic of Christ. Consequently, the church at Antioch became a model church. No letters of correction to Antioch. As we evaluate our local church it will be helpful to see the Christ-like characteristics of the church at Antioch.

Founded out of Persecution

First of all, the church of Antioch was founded out of persecution. Those who brought the gospel to Antioch came to that city having been persecuted as a result of the martyrdom of Stephen.

A certain serious commitment to following Christ is reflected when disciples are willing to suffer the consequences of persecution. The new believers in the new church shared that commitment of the founders. “What you win them with is what you win them to.” A model church is made up of believers who are willing to die for Christ if necessary!

Evangelistic

Second, the church of Antioch was evangelistic. The founders preached only to the Jews at first, but others caught the fire of evangelism and preached to the Gentiles as well. They preached to them the “Lord Jesus.” And a great number of them believed

and turned to the Lord. The community became familiar with the Christ-like believers through their evangelization. That’s why the people of Antioch coined the title “Christian”. A model church is made up of believers who are concerned about evangelizing their community.

Inclusive

Third, the church of Antioch was inclusive—both Jew and Gentile were welcome. This would lead to the Jerusalem Council which would try to resolve the transition from the limited sphere of the offer of the Kingdom to the inclusive nature of the Lord’s Great Commission. The church of Antioch was ahead of the mother church of Jerusalem in following the Head of the church. He said,

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of

the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen (Matthew 28:18-20).

James, the half brother of Jesus who presided at the Jerusalem Council, writes of this in his epistle.

My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality (James 2:1).

Well Taught

Partiality and prejudice cannot be held consistently while claiming to have faith in Christ. A model church is made up of believers who include all of God's children, reaching beyond racial, ethnic, social, status barriers.

Fourth, the church of Antioch was well taught. Barnabas arrives on the scene and evangelizes, teaches, and encourages; resulting in great growth. He hurries off to Tarsus and brings back his old friend, the fully taught apostle Paul. For a whole year Paul and Barnabas taught the church at Antioch. What a time of teaching that must have been. The apostle Paul had been instructed by the resurrected Head of the church in the Arabian Desert. He had matured in his faith in his Tarsus retreat. He was ready to teach. We read that teaching now in Paul's epistles, but he taught them in Antioch face to face. A model church must have consistent expository teaching of the Word of God by gifted men.

Multi-Gifted

Fifth, the church of Antioch was multi-gifted. Notice the various gifts operative at Antioch: evangelism,

encouragement, teaching, giving, prophecy, and hospitality. The very design of the local church is that of every member participating by using his spiritual gift for the building up of the body. The epistles dealing with spiritual gifts were not yet written, but the church of Antioch practiced what Paul would later write—he no doubt taught them these things. A model church must have church-wide participation of spiritual gifts by the members of the church.

Spiritual Leadership

Sixth, the church of Antioch was marked by spiritual leadership. Five of them are mentioned in Acts 13.

Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul (Acts 13:1).

These men were given to prayer and fasting as they considered the direction of the church of Antioch. Not only were they given to prayer and fasting to know the mind of God, they also were willing to obey the guidance given to them by the Holy Spirit. Not only were they ready to obey, but they obeyed when the primary leaders, Barnabas and Paul, would leave the church of Antioch for missionary activity. A model church must have spiritual, self-sacrificing leadership.

Financially Generous

Seventh, the church of Antioch was generous financially. Through prophecy, the church was informed that a famine was going to sweep through

the Roman Empire. The saints at Antioch sent relief to their Jewish brethren in Judea. They were not only generous, their generosity crossed ethnic and religious limitations. Their generosity reflected the later teaching of Paul that each should give according to his ability. And they did this willingly! A model church must have a biblical viewpoint of financial responsibility.

Missionary-Oriented

Eighth, and finally, the church of Antioch was a missionary-sending church. It is the church that commends Paul and Barnabas to the work, and it is the church of Antioch to which they return and report the great success of the First Missionary Journey. The church also was involved in the dispute of Paul and Barnabas and commended Paul and Silas, the new helper. A model church must have a world view of Christianity, not an isolated interest in the local ministry only.

No wonder "the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." And that's our name! †



Dave Glock
Dave is a graduate of Emmaus, Philadelphia College of Bible, and Dallas Theological Seminary. He has taught at Emmaus since 1968 and has served as Dean of Education for most of that period. He serves as an elder emeritus at Asbury Community Chapel. Dave has four children, all of whom serve in Assembly ministries, and fourteen grandchildren.



THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN LAODICEA

Revelation 3:14-22

By Mark R. Stevenson

The Historical Setting

Laodicea was situated at the center of three very important roads, not least of which was what William M. Ramsay called "the great eastern highway and central route of the Roman empire." Because of this strategic location, Laodicea became a major center of trade and commerce and even banking. D. A. Carson dubbed it "the Wall Street of Asia Minor." But there were other reasons for the city's wealth. The Laodiceans manufactured cloth and garments that were exported all over the world. In addition, Laodicea was home to a famous medical school which developed an eye salve that was also exported around the world.

The city became so wealthy that in A.D. 60, when Laodicea was devastated by an earthquake, they refused to accept any assistance from Rome. The citizens chose to rebuild the shattered city from its own resources. Evidently they were too self-sufficient to accept help from anyone. The Roman historian Tacitus wrote: "Laodicea arose from the ruins by the strength of her own resources, and with no help from us."

The city did have a significant weakness however. It had no natural water supply and had to have water piped in through underground aqueducts. The water was obtained from hot springs about five miles away. But by the time the water reached Laodicea, it was tepid and filled with sediment.

Clearly the local situation and conditions of Laodicea are used by Christ in this letter to speak to the church's spiritual condition. Unfortunately Christ does not commend this church in any way. It may have been prosperous outwardly, but its true spiritual condition was sickening to Jesus Christ.

The Description of Jesus (3:14)

The Lord identifies Himself as "the Amen, the faithful and true witness." He has some harsh words for this church. They had deceived themselves; they were blind to their true condition. But they needed to understand that what the Lord Christ told them was an accurate diagnosis of their true condition.

But Jesus is also described as "the

Beginning of the creation of God." Some heretical groups have suggested this means that Christ was the first created being. But of course, that is first degree heresy (cf. John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16-17). Christ as "the Beginning of the creation of God" means that He is the source and originator of creation, not its first product. This would be a powerful reminder to the proud, rich, and self-sufficient church that Christ was the source of their wealth and power—not themselves.

The Rebuke (3:15-16)

The church of Laodicea is not accused of immorality or apostasy or heresy, but it receives an indictment that is no less devastating. Christ says "you are lukewarm."

But what does this mean? Some have taken it refer to the opposite poles of the church's spiritual temperature or fervor. They are not hot, meaning they're not zealous and "on fire" for Christ. They are not cold, meaning they have not rejected the things of Christ altogether. They are somewhere in-between. They are lukewarm—dull and halfhearted when comes to

spiritual things.

The problem with this interpretation is that it is difficult to imagine Jesus would ever wish people were spiritually cold. We can understand why He would want people to be hot, but verse 15 says, “I wish that you were cold or hot,” as if these were two equally desirable conditions.

LUKEWARM, SEDIMENT-FILLED WATER IS NAUSEATING, AND THAT IS PRECISELY WHAT THE SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF THE CHURCH WAS LIKE TO THE LORD.

A much more satisfying explanation sees this metaphor as a reference to Laodicea's water problem. Six miles to the north was the city of Hierapolis, famous for its wonderful hot springs. These hot springs had tremendous medicinal value. In fact, scholars tell us these hot springs became so well known for their healing qualities that Hierapolis became a major health center.

On the other hand, the city of Colossae, ten miles to the east of Laodicea, was known for its cold, pure drinking water. These waters had a refreshing, life-giving effect. There's nothing like a cold drink of water on a hot day. You could get that at Colossae, but not in Laodicea!

By the time water arrived in Laodicea through underground aqueducts it was neither healing nor refreshing. Lukewarm, sediment-filled water is nauseating, and that is precisely what the spiritual condition of the church was like to the Lord. He says, “because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My

mouth.”

The word “spit” is a strong one; it literally means to “vomit” or to “throw up.” What Christ is saying to them is “your lukewarm spiritual condition and works make me sick!”

What a terrible thing to hear from the Lord. But it should make us ask the question: “Would the Lord say something similar of me and my church?”

The Problem (3:17)

Verse 17 defines what lukewarmness in the church of Laodicea looked like. They thought they were rich and didn't need anyone's help. The pride of Laodicea was infectious; it was part of the atmosphere and culture of that city. Unfortunately it had a tremendous influence on the church. The church had succumbed to the affluence of its surroundings and allowed the attitudes of the city to shape its perspective on spiritual things. The church became like the world. In their own minds they were rich and had need of nothing.

There is no poverty of spirit in Laodicea, no contrition before the Lord, no brokenness, no meekness, and no sense of dependence on the grace of God. But there is a vast discrepancy between their opinion of themselves and Christ's evaluation of them (“you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked”). They assumed their material wealth pointed to spiritual wealth. But their pride and self-sufficiency made them blind to the truth.

Ironically Christ describes the Laodiceans' condition in terms of the very industries that made them rich. Jesus says they are poor—spiritually bankrupt—in a city that took pride in its wealth. He says they are blind—devoid of spiritual vision and insight—

in a city renowned for its healing eye salve. Jesus says they are naked—spiritually shamed, wearing nothing but the rags of self-righteousness—in a city famous for its fabric and clothing factories. Before the Lord they were wretched and miserable.

Instructions for Correction (3:18-19)

For all their faults, the Lord graciously offers them the opportunity to repent and be restored: *I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see* (3:18).

To a proud, self-sufficient church, this is humbling advice. Part of the irony is that Christ counsels the church, whom He just called spiritually bankrupt, to buy certain things. But how can they buy anything if they are poor? The simple fact is they cannot. Spiritually they have no resources; they have no spiritual purchasing power. But thankfully the price has been paid for them by Christ Himself. The Bible makes clear that our salvation and all its benefits and blessings were not earned by us but were purchased for us by Christ with His own blood at the cross (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

They considered themselves self-sufficient but they needed to find their sufficiency in Christ. The great banks and all the wealth of Laodicea could never purchase for them what they really needed: spiritual wealth. Only Christ could give them that.

Spiritually they were naked and all the wonderful clothes produced in the factories of Laodicea could never cover them. What they needed was not the filthy rags of their own righteousness, but the garments of salvation—the

righteousness of Christ. Only Christ could give them that.

The physicians at the medical school in Laodicea with their famous eye salve could never treat spiritual blindness. Only Christ could do that.

Verse 19 adds, *Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline*. In spite of their lukewarm condition and sin, Christ loves them. Indeed, the very fact that He rebukes and disciplines them demonstrates His love. A mark of God's love is that He does not allow us to continue in a spiritually wretched condition. He disciplines us. And although it is never pleasant to be disciplined, it is for our good that we might lose our lukewarmness and share in His holiness (Heb. 12:10-11).

THE MESSAGE TO
LAODICEA IS: DON'T LET
THE WORLD SQUEEZE
YOU INTO ITS MOLD.

The Invitation (3:20)

We often use this text as a gospel invitation (“behold, I stand at the door and knock”), but strictly speaking it is an invitation to a lukewarm church to renewed fellowship with their Lord and Savior. But notice also, it is a personal appeal: “if *anyone* hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to *him* and will dine with *him*, and *he* with Me.”

Reformation in a church begins with individuals; revival begins with me. When I discover afresh my true dependence on Christ for all things, I bring that perspective into the assembly and suddenly Christ is no longer outside knocking; He is at the center. Will we open to Him? The imagery here of Christ dining with us speaks of very close personal fellowship. Grant Osborne points

out that “to share a meal in the ancient world was to share a life.” This is not a rushed visit in passing, but a lingering of Christ's presence with us. What a glorious invitation!

The Promise (3:21)

Finally, to those who are zealous and repent and thus overcome, a glorious promise is held out to them: they will sit with Christ on His throne. In other words, they will reign with Christ in His coming Kingdom. Those whom Christ presently finds nauseating are not only offered an opportunity to repent and to enjoy warm fellowship with Him here and now, they are offered the privilege of reigning with Him in His glorious Kingdom. It goes without saying that we are unworthy of such an honored position, but such is the grace of Christ. Surely such grace should motivate us to be overcomers.

Application

The message to Laodicea is: Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold. The church allowed their affluent society to give a false sense of self-sufficiency and blind them to their spiritual poverty. Don't let the wealth and pride of America blind you to the truth that our greatest needs are not for a new house and a better car

and the latest technology. The American dream is fleeting, but the beatific vision is eternal. Our greatest needs are spiritual. Don't allow the blessing of material riches to impoverish your soul. There are unsearchable riches to be had, but they are only found in Christ (Eph. 3:8). He alone meets our deepest needs, heals our blindness and clothes us with his own righteousness. Laodicea forgot the words of the Lord Jesus “apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Let's not make the same mistake. †



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THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION: EPHESUS

Revelation 2:1-7

By Ben Mathew



Historical Setting

Ephesus was one of the most powerful cities in the Roman Empire, and with more than a quarter of a million people, it was a cultural, economic, and religious center that made it the most important city in Asia Minor. But apart from its geographic and economic prominence, the city of Ephesus was most famous as the center of worship for the fertility goddess Artemis (Diana). The temple of Artemis, the “Artemision”, was a famous landmark made completely out of marble and known as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The idol of Artemis, a shapeless, black, many-breasted statue that supposedly fell from the heavens (Acts 19:24) was housed in the great temple, and was attended by numerous temple prostitutes in vile acts of idolatry and immorality. Ephesus was also the home to many other sacred temples, including some to the emperors, and was eventually titled by Domitian as the “warden” or guardian of the imperial cult. It’s within this city of magic,

sorcery, idolatry and immorality that a small group of Christ followers labored to live by faith.

The church was most likely established by Priscilla and Aquila, who had been left there by Paul in A.D. 52 (Acts 18:18-25). Apollos helped in the early years of the church and Paul later returned to Ephesus and spent more than 2 years there, using the church as a base of evangelistic operations to the whole region (Acts. 19:10). Paul most likely stayed in Ephesus while writing his letter to the Corinthians and would later send another letter to the saints at Ephesus while imprisoned in Rome. The fact that Ephesus is mentioned first in the writing to the seven churches is important. Ephesus was the mother church out of whose ministry the other six were founded (Acts 19:10). The correspondence to Ephesus provides a template by which the Lord addresses the other six churches and by which we can find encouragement and exhortation for our churches today.

Description of Jesus

As seen in the other church letters, the description of Christ is perfectly chosen to address the needs of that church. These images of Christ “holding” and “walking” were most likely taken from the first chapter of the book (1:16; 1:13), and are to remind Ephesus that Christ is the Head, Lord, and Sovereign of the church. Christ is the one who “holds” the seven stars which represent the seven churches and they are under His authority, and are to do His will for His glory. Second, Christ is portrayed as “walking” in the midst of the churches. The imagery of walking combines the ideas of concern for and authority over the church. As Paul stated earlier in his letter to the Ephesians, husbands are to love their wives as “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish

(Eph. 5:25-27). It is Christ that loves, examines, and evaluates the church, and as its head ruler, has the authority to address the church.

Strengths

The church at Ephesus is commended for its “toil” and “endurance”. Their toil against false teachers was an all-out effort, as they held to a high, holy standard of orthodoxy and doctrinal purity. The church at Ephesus had “tested” these false teachers and had taken the encouragement of Paul to not “give the devil an opportunity” (Eph. 4:27) and to be careful of the “savage wolves who would come in among you...and not spare the flock” (Acts 20:29). The church would not “bear” these false teachers and were commended by the Lord for their “toil” in this area. It is in this toiling they are also commended for their “endurance” in the midst of trying circumstances. Their patience is “for His name’s sake,” and gives their endurance meaning, purpose, and direction. The church in its toil against false teachers and its endurance for the sake of Christ has been commended for their works. They have “not grown weary” in their triumph against heresy and false teachers.

Weaknesses

Although they have maintained doctrinal purity and theological commitment, they have fallen into cold orthodoxy and have “left their first love.” In their desire to fight for doctrinal purity, they forgot who they were fighting for. As they toiled for correct theology, they neglected the person they toiled for. It is clear that the Ephesians loved truth, but they may have loved truth more than they loved God or one another. They had fulfilled Christ’s

prophecy in Matthew 24:12 that “the love of many will grow cold,” and had replaced their early love and passion for Christ and others with a harsh and hard zeal for orthodoxy.

Instruction for Correction

But the gracious Lord of the church will not exhort without giving opportunity for return. The solution to their spiritual condition is to “remember,” “repent,” and “do.” Much like encouragements given to Israel, the church was instructed to remember where they had fallen from. Forgetfulness is frequently the initial cause of spiritual decline, and actively bringing to mind the past experience of their “first love” is the first step in renewal of relationship. The church is being told to begin reflecting on their *past* history, to make *present* repentance, so they can do *future* “works they did at first”. The church may have forgotten their first love, but their first love will not forget them.

Warning

The solution given by the Lord is clear and direct, but carries with it stern warning and judgment if not heeded. Scholars debate whether the “coming” of the Lord in judgment would be an imminent coming in judgment or a reference to the Second Coming of the Lord in glory; in either case, the seriousness of judgment is to be felt upon the saints at Ephesus should they not regard the exhortation of the Lord. The divine judgment would be a removal of their lampstand, and the symbolic language is clearly a reference to the loss of their witness and the eventual end of the church.

Application for Today

The letter to Ephesus has much encouragement and application for our churches today. We live in a pluralistic culture that prizes “tolerance” of ideas rather than a conviction of truth. Both outside and within the church walls, we are inundated with theological concerns that must be addressed, as we “contend earnestly for the faith once delivered” (Jude 1:3). But in our zeal to preserve doctrinal purity, we must always remember who we are contending for, and the love we must have for Him, and for others. Our passion for doctrinal purity must be for the glory and love shown to our Lord. Our enthusiasm for proper orthodoxy must always be directed towards charity and devotion to others. If we find our love of theology to be greater than our love of God and others, we must remember where we were, and repent to find greater strength and zeal to do the works He has called us to. †



Ben Mathew

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THE LETTER OF JESUS CHRIST TO THE CHURCH AT PERGAMUM

By Ken Daughters



Pergamum was one of the most prominent cities in Asia, the official capital of the Roman province, and the official residence of the Attalic princes. It was built on a prominent 1,000-foot-high, rocky hill dominating a broad plain, 55 miles north of Smyrna and 20 miles from the Aegean Sea. The first provincial temple of the Imperial cult was built here to honor Augustus. Caesar worship was most intense here. It also had temples to honor Zeus, Athena, Dionysus, and Asklepios.

It is the birthplace of Galen, the second most famous physician next to Hippocrates. It was the center of the worship of the god of healing, Asklepios, who was represented as holding a serpent. People came from around the world to feed the serpents as worship. The sick spent the night in the temple hoping that one of the roaming snakes would touch and heal them. It was home to the second best library in the world at 200,000 volumes. They imported papyrus from

Egypt until Ptolemy Epiphanes became jealous and cut them off. Hence, Eumenes was motivated to invent a new writing material from animal skins. Our term “parchment” is derived from the name of their city. The library was later sent to Egypt as a gift from Anthony to Cleopatra.

Jesus introduces Himself as the one with the two-edged sword (cf. Revelation 1:16, 19:15, 21). His Word, the Word of God, can be either an instrument of salvation or death, depending on the response. He has both the force of a warrior, and judicial authority to pronounce judgment on them. All power belongs to Him. How will the church respond to His rebuke?

In each of these letters, the church has been deeply influenced by the city in which it dwells. The church in Pergamum has a particularly difficult setting. They dwell where Satan’s throne is. Satan’s power has had particular success here. The city was the headquarters for emperor wor-

ship. A temple to Augustus and Roma had stood here since 29 B.C. Later another temple was erected to worship Trajan. Caesar worship was the greatest menace among all the paganism and worldliness that threatened them. One of them, Antipas (“against all”), had taken a stand against the cult and had suffered martyrdom. Only Rome had the power of capital punishment. According to tradition, he was burned to death in a bronze bull during the reign of Domitian. He would not compromise his loyalty to Christ. He is identified by Christ as His witness, His faithful one. The church is commended along with Antipas for holding fast to Christ’s name and not denying the faith under such severe persecution. They had remained doctrinally pure, and personally loyal to Christ under duress which ultimately was from Satan himself.

In spite of such an important commendation, the church receives a severe rebuke from Christ Himself. Though they had remained loyal

under persecution, they were now tolerating two classes of heretics among them: those who held to the teaching of Balaam, and those who held to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. The majority of the congregation appears to continue holding fast to the faith, but they are guilty of indifference regarding these heretics. They are indiscriminately tolerating their compromise.

The story of Balaam is recorded in Numbers 22-25 and 31. He was an alleged prophet of God who betrayed his calling for profit. He was willing to be hired by King Balak of the Moabites to curse Israel so they would not be conquered. He tried to earn the commission, but couldn’t bring himself to lie about what God told him to prophesy. His sin of greed is condemned in 2 Peter 2:15 and Jude 11. But according to Numbers 31:16, he suggested a more creative approach. Apparently he thought Israel would forfeit God’s protection if they could be lured into worshiping idols. The plan was subtle. The women of Moab would be used as a stumbling block, like bait placed on a trap, to lure Israel into sexual immorality, intermarriage, and eventually idol worship. God judged Israel for their harlotry at Baal of Peor. Twenty-four thousand died from plague. Thus, Balaam is the father of religious syncretism. Those in the church at Pergamum who followed after Balaam influenced members of the church to relax their principles and intermingle with unbelievers in a compromising manner. They participated in the feasts and ate meat offered to idols, which would eventually result in idol worship and even fornication. They intermarried with unbelievers.

Though the Jerusalem Council clearly decided that Christians do not have liberty in the matters of these

idoltrous feasts and the sins that accompanied them (Acts 15: 20, 29), the Nicolaitans at Pergamum came to a similar conclusion as the Balaamites, but for a different reason. Both groups sought a compromise between Christian standards of living and Graeco-Roman culture and religion. The Nicolaitans were libertarian in their Christian ethics, believing they could engage in immoral behavior with impunity.

BOTH GROUPS SOUGHT A COMPROMISE BETWEEN CHRISTIAN STANDARDS OF LIVING AND GRAECO-ROMAN CULTURE AND RELIGION.

Jesus calls on the church to repent, or else! Unless they purge themselves of these heretics and this unjustified tolerance, He will come quickly and make war against them. The judgment of His sword at the Second Coming is imminent. They cannot continue to be lenient toward these heretics.

What Jesus is saying is important and should be heeded. The believer should keep overcoming whatever attacks come from the enemy, standing victorious until the end. Two rewards are promised. The first is hidden manna. Rather than eating meat offered to idols, fellowship with Christ, the bread of heaven, should be our spiritual food. When the struggle is over, the manna in the Ark of the Covenant that Jeremiah hid before the destruction of Jerusalem will be revealed. The second reward is a white stone with a new name inscribed on it. White stones were used in antiquity as coupons for such things as free doles of bread, free admission to special

events, or as symbols of victory at the games. These stones are inscribed with a new name, reflecting our new status as belonging to Christ. Such a personalized stone may serve as a token of admission to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

The lesson of this letter is to repent of indiscriminate tolerance. We must resist amalgamation into sinful society and religion. We must beware of syncretism. We must avoid compromise. We must not abuse our liberties. Just how much incense may I burn to the emperor before I have betrayed Christ? May I attend the feasts? Is it permissible to eat meat offered to idols? Is it sufficient if I avoid idol worship and fornication? Satan has laid the bait on the trap. Will we fall as Israel did? Do we consider ourselves strong enough not to be seduced? Our culture and society today has all the dangers that existed in ancient Pergamum. Our task is to hold fast to His name and not deny the faith. †



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SMYRNA: THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

Revelation 2:8-11

By Dr. Daniel H. Smith

**“THE BLOOD OF THE MARTYRS
IS THE SEED OF THE CHURCH.”** — Tertullian (c. A.D. 160-220)

In dictating letters to the churches in the Roman province of Asia, the risen, glorified Christ included a brief letter to the church in the city of Smyrna. Smyrna was a seaport city on Aegean Sea about 35 miles north of Ephesus. Although it was not a large city, it was noted for its beauty and the presence of a pagan temple erected in honor of Emperor Tiberius, who was worshiped as a god.

The letter to the church at Smyrna, only four verses long, is the shortest of the letters in the book of Revelation. It is distinctive, along with the letter to the church at Philadelphia, in having no words of warning or rebuke like the other letters. However it does contain a number of powerful messages not only to the persecuted first-century church but also to Christians suffering affliction or martyrdom through the centuries and into this 21st century.

The risen Christ identified Himself as “the first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life.” He had told His disciples in the upper room that the persecution He experienced would continue on in the world’s treatment of them (Jn. 15:18-23). But here, in His own resurrection, He promises resurrection and life to His church. This glorious prospect has strengthened and sustained Christians all through the centuries of church history.

Undoubtedly it was, and is, comforting to persecuted Christians to hear the Savior say “I know your tribulation and your poverty.” That the Lord knows is a great comfort to His people. Faith will rest in His Word even when the extremities of life lead to human responses of being alone and forgotten. Before He ascended He promised, “I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Although the book of Acts makes

it clear that in that first century unbelieving Jews and Gentiles participated and joined in persecuting Christians, the real dynamic is from Satan, the Devil. Our Lord’s emphasis on this fact should help afflicted Christians avoid paranoid, “strike back” responses and rather turn the other cheek as He taught us. In an important doctrinal passage on this subject (Eph. 6:12) we learn that “our struggle is not against flesh and blood.” Our Lord’s prayer for forgiveness for those who were nailing Him to the cross should set the pattern for Christians’ response to hostile people around them.

The Savior’s comforting words, “do not fear” come as the last of 25 “fear nots” in the New Testament. The Lord’s people need to live in the written Scriptures and hear these comforting words continually through the threats and uncertainties of life.

The appeal and promises of this



letter come as highlights in our Lord’s message to His church: “Be faithful until death.” The history of the church is filled with uncounted numbers of martyrdoms. Even today many are being killed just because they are Christians. We need to pray for them; for faithfulness to death and faith to face death with certain promise of the crown of life from the hands of our Savior.

The final promise of this letter, “He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death,” should ring through the mind and heart of every true believer in Christ. Whether living or dying for the glory of our Lord Jesus we can be motivated and strengthened by the fact that our names are written in the Book of Life (Rev. 20:15) and our sure destiny is heaven and His presence in eternity. It will be worth it all when we see Jesus. “For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” (2 Cor. 4:17). †



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WHETHER LIVING OR DYING FOR THE
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THE CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA

Revelation 3:7-13

By David J. MacLeod

Introduction

The letter to Philadelphia explodes two myths of modern Christianity. First, there is the myth of bigness—the Philadelphian church was small and inconsequential in the world’s eyes but highly regarded by the Lord. Pastor Juan Carlos Ortiz, after building a large church in Buenos Aires, Argentina, found that most of his congregation was spiritually immature. Hundreds of new faces meant nothing. “Cemeteries also grow in numbers.” Second, there is the myth of ritualistic traditional religion. Religious people can attend beautiful places of worship and profess to worship God, and yet, as “the synagogue of Satan” illustrates, they can hate Christ and His people.

The Commission to the Angel, v. 7a

THE CITY

The site of Philadelphia is now marked by the small Turkish agricultural center of Alashehir. The city is about 30 miles ESE from Sardis. Unlike Sardis the site is not spectacular; it slopes gently to a level plain from the foot of a little hill. Philadelphia was commonly called the “Gateway to the East,” a major highway ran through it into the high central plateau of Asia Minor. The word *philadelphia* means “brotherly love.” It was named by Eumenes II (d. 159 B.C.) in honor of his brother Attalus, who resisted Roman help to betray his brother. Because of his loyalty Attalus was given the name *Philadelphus* (“having a loved brother”).



CHARACTERISTICS

William M. Ramsay says the city was marked by four distinguishing characteristics: (1) It was a *missionary city*. The founders of the city sought to make it a center of Hellenism; that is, they wanted to spread the Greek language and customs. (2) It was a city that lived in *dread of disaster*. Although the city was a great wine-producing region and celebrated Dionysius (Roman, Bacchus), the god of freedom, revelry, and sensual enjoyment, the people lived in fear of regular earthquakes. Strabo, the Roman historian, called it “a city full of earthquakes.” (3) Due to the fact that many ran outside the city during these episodes, it was a city where many dwelled outside the city in tents. (4) It was a city that took a new name. After one of the earthquakes Emperor Tiberius sent aid and the people renamed the city Neocaesarea, a name that fell into disuse after the emperor’s death (A.D. 37). (5) To Ramsay’s list I would add that Philadelphia had a *large population of Jews*. They boasted in their historic privileges and the promises of God, and they persecuted the Jewish Christians by casting them out of the synagogue.

The Character of Christ, v. 7b

The assembly in Philadelphia was feeble but was intent upon the truth and reality. The description of Christ in verse 7 is just what they needed to hear. He is “the holy one,” a title used in the Old Testament of Yahweh (Isa. 40:25; 57:15). John Stott says He is “self-consciously divine.” He is sinless and absolutely set apart to God. It

is a title that was also used of Israel’s Messiah (Mk. 1:24; Lk. 4:34; Jn. 6:69). He is “the true one,” that is, He is real or genuine as opposed to all that is unreal and spurious. He sees right through all that is phony in our bigness-minded, celebrity-oriented Christian culture.

He has the “key of David,” an expression that takes us back to Isaiah 22 where God says to Eliakim, “The key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder, so he shall open and no one shall shut; and he shall shut and no one shall open” (v. 22). The door to David’s house was opened and locked by this one person. In the book of Revelation this has reference to the Millennial Age. The Jews believed and the Bible teaches that one day the Messiah will reestablish the throne of David. The unbelieving Jews claimed this Kingdom was theirs due to their physical relationship to David. “No,” says the risen Christ. “Access to the Kingdom of God is through Me. I am the doorkeeper (cf. Jn. 10:7).

The Commendation of Philadelphia, vv. 8–10

AN OPEN DOOR

Before listing the good deeds of the assembly he makes a parenthetical remark that picks up on the thought of the “key of David.” The Lord has put before the assembly “an open door.” This does not refer to a door for service or a door of prayer. The reference to “the key of David” indicates that He is speaking of the door opened to the glory of the Messianic Age in the Millennial Age. The city of Philadelphia was designed to

be a door to cultural brotherly love based on Hellenism. The assembly in Philadelphia stood before another door, the assurance of free access into the Millennial Kingdom of Christ, where the inhabitants would be united in a true brotherly love by the Holy Spirit. The verb “have put” (“I have put before you an open door”) is literally “have given.” It is in the perfect tense (*dedoika*) indicating that the door was opened in the past and remains open. It was opened at the cross of the Lord Jesus. The door remains open today for all who will enter.

He goes on to describe their deeds. “You have a little power.” The church was insignificant; it lacked the reputation of Sardis (v. 1). God does not evaluate using our categories of success, namely, big facilities, large crowds, Christian celebrities. These are our yardsticks, not God’s. The believers in Philadelphia had kept God’s Word. They embraced the doctrines of biblical Christianity. They centered their lives and meetings on the Person of Jesus Christ. “You have not denied My name.”

THE SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN

In Philadelphia there was a colony of Jews. They met in a synagogue, kept the Sabbath day, listened as the Torah was being read (v. 9). But they believed in the “myth of externals.” Religion was practicing the traditions of Judaism. A true Jew is an Israelite who accepts Christ as Savior and Messiah (Rom. 2:28–29). The same mentality is reflected today by many mainline churches that have church buildings, ministers, orders of service, hymns, and prayers. They talk of the Fatherhood of God, but they are not the people of God. They have never been born again, and they despise the Christ-centered, cross-centered, and conversion-centered truths of evangelical Christianity. Jesus says they are “of your father the devil” (Jn. 8:44). When the Messianic Kingdom is established these rebellious Jews will learn their folly. When they bow in surrender to Messiah (Phil. 2:10–11) they will see to their horror standing with Christ the true heirs of the Kingdom—believers in Jesus, both Jew and Gentile.

THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION

Because they have persevered in the faith the Philadelphian Christians will be kept from “the hour of testing” (v. 10). The “hour of testing” is the seven-year period of tribulation that will take place immediately prior to Christ’s Second Coming (Rev. 6–19). This terrible time will come upon “the whole world” (lit. “inhabited earth”). It will be a time of wrath upon rebellious, Christ-rejecting mankind. Just as we apply the commands, instructions, warnings, and promises of the New Testament epistles to ourselves today, so we may apply this promise to the Philadelphian Christians. Believers are promised they will be kept from the hour of testing—not just the testing. The Lord does not say He will keep the church through the Tribulation. Nor does He say that He will lift the church out of the Tribulation. Rather, He will preserve the church from the Tribulation.

The Challenge to the Philadelphian Christians, vv. 11–13

THE IMMINENT RETURN OF CHRIST

The keynote of the book is struck in verse 11: “Behold I am coming quickly.” The believer is to live his life in light of the imminent return of Christ. We are here reminded that although we shall escape the judgments of the Tribulation we are not to presume upon the grace of God. We must be faithful in life and service or lose out on the rewards prepared for Christ’s faithful servants.

THE PILLAR IN GOD’S TEMPLE

In the days of Solomon there were two pillars in the Temple (1 Ki. 7:15–22). One was named Jachin (“established”) and the other Boaz (“strength”). In this age the believer has little strength by worldly standards, but in the Millennial Age he will be a pillar of strength. There will be no more earthquakes driving believers from the city; instead they will remain serenely and confidently in God’s presence. This promise is made to the “overcomer,” that is the believer whose perseverance in faith demonstrates that

he is a true Christian (cf. 1 Jn. 5:4).

THE THREE NAMES

The Lord goes on to promise that in the Messianic Age His people will be given three names: (1) “the name of My God.” In Old Testament times the high priest’s miter was inscribed with the words, “Holiness unto Yahweh” (Ex. 28:36–38). In the Millennial Age God’s people will be stamped as God’s possession and with His character. (2) “the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem.” The city of Philadelphia was the “gateway to the east.” Believers are citizens of the heavenly city, whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10; cf. Phil. 3:20). (3) “My new name.” Jesus has many names, and He will keep them all as a reminder of His saving work. He also has a name “which no one knows” (Rev. 19:12) a name that speaks of the depth of His being. We shall always be learning new things about our Savior.

Conclusion

It has been said that the letter to Philadelphia revolves around three symbols: (1) the “open door,” that is the church’s redemption and deliverance from this earth and access into the earthly Kingdom of Christ; (2) “the key of David,” that is the authority of Christ to sovereignly grant salvation and admission into the Kingdom; and (3) “the pillar in God’s temple,” which symbolically speaks of the believer’s security in God’s presence for all eternity. †



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THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA: WHEN TOLERANCE TRUMPS TRUTH

Revelation 2:18-29

By Bob Deffinbaugh



I have long been fascinated with our Lord's warning regarding "straining gnats and swallowing camels" (Mt. 23:24). I would like to apply His words to our consideration of the church at Thyatira. There are enough "gnats" in our text to fuel much speculation. Fortunately, we only have time for the "camels." The camels of our text are those things which are actually in our text (not secular history); are clear to every reader (not just the scholars); and are crucial to understanding and applying our Lord's words to the church then and today. So allow me to set forth some "camels" and then seek to pursue their implications.

Camel Number One: The description of our Lord is awe-inspiring. It draws upon John's description of our Lord in Revelation 1 as well as Daniel's description of our Lord in Daniel 10:6. If Daniel and John were left trembling from what they saw (Dan. 10:7-8; Rev. 1:17), then surely we should hear and heed His word for He is the One "who searches minds and hearts" and "gives

to each one of you what your deeds deserve" (Rev. 2:23).

Camel Number Two: We know very little about the church at Thyatira. We don't know who founded it or when. We do know from Acts 16:6-7 that the Holy Spirit kept Paul from going there (that is, to Asia). We also know that Lydia, who was saved through Paul's ministry in Philippi, was from the city of Thyatira (Acts 16:14). She may very well have returned to that city with the gospel.

Camel Number Three: We know from verse 19 in our text that there were some faithful Christians in the church at Thyatira. They were commended because their deeds bore witness to their love (unlike Ephesus, Rev. 2:4), faith, service, and perseverance. Since these qualities were increasing, we know that those commended were growing in their faith.

Camel Number Four: A certain woman whom our Lord calls "Jezebel"

claimed to be a prophetess, but she was obviously not a true prophet. This is evident in several ways. First, she was called "Jezebel," one of the most wicked women in all the Bible. This woman must have been Jezebel-like. (For example, did she use her husband's authority as her own?) Second, she was teaching and leading men, though this was not permitted in the church (1 Tim. 2:11-12). Third, her teaching was based upon her alleged revelations, which were neither biblical nor Christ-centered. The author calls her subject matter "the deep things of Satan" (Rev. 2:24). This appealed to those who wished to possess "insider information" not known to the unenlightened. Fourth, the "fruit" of her teaching (see Mt. 7:15ff.) was immorality and eating foods sacrificed to idols, both of which were forbidden to believers (Acts 15:20, 29). "Jezebel" was immoral, and so were those who followed her. The coming judgment upon "Jezebel" and her followers was severe.

Camel Number Five: The godly saints of the church at Thyatira were rebuked for tolerating "Jezebel" and those who followed her (verse 20). While not embracing her teaching or practicing the evils she advocated, the godly saints at Thyatira somehow allowed her to practice and to promote sin without confronting it. It is clear that God had confronted her in some way and had given her time to repent (which she refused to do). It does not appear that this rebuke came through church discipline (Mt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5).

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Camel Number Six: The godly saints of Thyatira are not instructed to do anything more than to "hold fast to what you have until I come" (v. 25). Those who overcome are promised authority and the privilege of ruling over the nations with Christ. If an overcomer is to be rewarded by ruling with Christ over the nations, then it would seem appropriate for him to exercise a little authority now by dealing with sin in the church (see 1 Cor. 6:2).

Two Important Questions

Two major questions arise from a consideration of these "camels." First, Why

does our Lord not require more of the saints in Thyatira? Why are they not commanded to do something about Jezebel? The answer appears to be that it is now too late for Jezebel and her hard-core followers. It is now time for judgment, and this judgment will come at the hand of the King. Let the others be warned that if they don't repent, judgment is near. This warning comes from Him who is the Judge.

The second question gets to the heart of the message of this text for Christians today: How can we explain the fact that there are godly saints in the church at Thyatira, and yet at the same time there are false prophets like Jezebel and professing Christians who are living in sin? Our Lord tells us that the problem of the godly is their ungodly tolerance. How can Christians justify such tolerance? I believe it is the result of what some would call "the privatization of faith." Our culture is happy for us to believe what we will, and to practice whatever we wish, as long as we keep it to ourselves. In this way, abortion, homosexuality, and divorce are tolerated by our society, and by many in the church. Thus in this mindset, the sin of others—even professing Christians—is none of our business.

Living in a world which believes there is no absolute truth and which promotes (demands!) privatization, it is not difficult

to understand how things could be as they were in Thyatira, just as they are today in Tacoma or Tallahassee. Godly living is important, and commendable, but we have corporate (one another) obligations as well. We are our brother's keeper, and thus we are responsible for the purity and spiritual health of the church. Personal piety is crucial, but it is not enough. The church at Thyatira should teach us that tolerance must never trump the truth. †



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SARDIS: YESTERDAY'S CHURCH

Revelation 3:1-6

By Dr. William McRae



“WHEN YOUR MEMORIES ARE MORE EXCITING THAN YOUR DREAMS, THEN YOU HAVE BEGUN TO DIE.”

The EXHORTATION centers around five key words (3:2-3).

Be watchful - Revive! Wake up!

Strengthen - Retain from your past what is timelessly true and relevant to any generation.

Remember - Recover what has been lost and neglected.

Hold fast - Resist the drift. Stand firm and strong.

Repent - Repent: Time to change!

It's the call for a solemn assembly; a time of serious prayer, confession, rededication, clarifying your vision, identifying your mission.

If not – there is a solemn WARNING

I will come upon you as a thief (3:3b).

This is a reference back to the invasion of Cyrus, king of Persia in 500 B.C. Sardis was a citadel on a plateau—thought to be an impregnable fortress. It was guarded by sentinels at the narrow passageway entrance. Cyrus waited for the sentinels to fall asleep. His soldiers crept in and took the citadel and city.

The church in Sardis was in a city that had been conquered in spite of its security, only because its watchmen fell asleep. To the church in that city the Lord is saying; wake up, be alert, or else.

How could the 1st century land of the seven churches (Asia) become a 21st century nation of mosques (Turkey)? There was, of course, the invasion of the Turks in A.D. 1453. The success of the Turks was largely due to the spiritual deterioration of

the churches in that land—and Sardis was the first to go. Could this ever happen in North America? The city of Sardis sounds a solemn alarm. It was the first to fall. But all is not lost—not yet.

At last, a brief word of COMMENDATION

You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments (3:4).

They were modern Josephs and Daniels—unspotted in their world—a shadow remnant of better days. What a delight they must have been to the Lord.

The letter concludes with three PROMISES (3:4-5), reserved for “overcomers” whom John clearly identifies as believers (1 Jn. 5:5). As such they are not rewards for the faithful, but are blessings of God's grace granted to all believers and are presented here as incentives to hear and obey what the Spirit says.

So what do you say to a “yesterday's church?”

1. The Lord is not impressed with our past when we use it as a pillow.

2. Reputations aren't always reliable or reality.

3. Take a careful look for signs of death. What can you do?

4. Take a second look. What are your strengths?

Find the faithful few. Start here!

The challenge from Sardis: Rather than asleep and dying, be alive and growing. How? An effective church today builds on this strategic balance:

Anchored in the past, geared for the future.

IT'S TIME TO DREAM AGAIN! †



Dr. William McRae
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1966). He holds a Master of Theology and Doctor of Ministry from Dallas Theological Seminary. Bill has spent twenty-five years in pastoral leadership (Renfrew, Ontario, Dallas, Texas, London, Ontario), and twenty years with Tyndale University College and Seminary in Toronto, where he presently serves as President Emeritus. Bill and his wife, Marilyn, celebrated 50 years of marriage in 2006. They have four married children and 14 grandchildren.

Dr. Howard Hendricks grabbed my attention when he said; “When your memories are more exciting than your dreams, then you have begun to die.” That's true not only of individuals, but of churches as well. In either case the results can be devastating. So what do you say to a church that is dying? Precisely what our Lord said to the church in Sardis.

In antiquity, Sardis was a great and wealthy city. Today, Sardis is a wretched village of poverty and ruins. No Christians. No church!

The story of the church reflects the “death” of the city. It had a glorious reputation but in two generations an inglorious reality. A prominent past, a pathetic present; alive in name, dead in spirit; boasting of their past, coasting for the present. Know any such churches? The Head of the church does!

Want to reverse the trend? Want to fireproof your church from such a trend? Suddenly this letter becomes personal and timely.

As in every letter it begins with a

portrait of CHRIST that sets the tone for the letter and uncovers the need of the church.

These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars (3:1a).

The freshness and fullness of the Holy Spirit (1:4) are available from our Lord. The leaders of the church (1:20) are responsible and accountable to the Lord. It's a portrait that promises both incredible potential for a new day and inevitable censure for the apostle John's day.

Then comes the COMPLAINT:

I know your works that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead (3:1b).

Only in this letter does the complaint precede the commendation. It's right up front, a not-so-subtle indication of the severity of the situation and the Lord's displeasure. They had a great reputation. Can't you hear the crowd saying; “Sardis? That's an alive bunch! That's where it's really happening!”

Apparently this reputation was because of an impressive past. There was a day when it was alive—but no longer. You are dead. Upon examination the Inspector (see 1:13) explains:

Your deeds are far from right in the sight of God (3:2b, NLB).

This was the very charge of the Lord through Malachi to ancient Israel. They were going through all the motions but their hearts were not right with God (Mal. 1:7-14).

What might be some signs of a dead or dying church today?

Preaching without power
Service without sacrifice
Worship without joy
Receiving the Word without responding

Programs without progress
Ingrown without outreach
Challenged without changing

Detect anything like that today? The Lord does and this is what He has to say:



Journey | Love Bears, Believes, Hopes and Endures All Things

Love Bears, Believes, Hopes and Endures All Things

By Alexander Strauch

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

1 Cor. 13:7

Love is tenacious. I once read a story of a criminally minded young man who continually got in trouble with the police for drugs and stealing. He was arrested and jailed several times and eventually was sent to prison for much of his remaining life. After a short time in prison, he was forgotten by his friends and even by his father. Outside the walls of his prison cell, he was a forgotten human being except for one person. Every week his mother would board a bus and travel several hours to visit

him in prison. After a few hours of visitation, she would board the bus and return home. Almost daily she wrote letters and often sent books and personal items as allowed by prison officials. Neither distance, prison walls, money, or time could stop her from loving and visiting her son.

Some people think that loving people are weak and spineless. But nothing could be further from the truth. Unloving people are the ones who are weak because they are controlled by their petty, self-centered cravings. Jesus was the most loving person who ever existed, and he was not weak. He gave his life to save others. Paul's continual pursuit of the Corinthians after all the heartache

they had caused him demonstrated not weakness but rather great strength and endurance.

The Tenacious Power of Love

Paul concludes and summarizes his description of love with four short, positive clauses that tell us what love does. 1 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Bears All Things

Love bears up² under the heavy load of life's problems and sufferings. It holds steadfast and remains strong despite opposition, deprivation, and hard work. Love is courageous. It can

carry enormous weight; thus loving leaders have an amazing ability to endure all sorts of suffering and frustration for the sake of others and the gospel (1 Cor. 9:12). This is a trait of all good shepherds (Gen. 31:38-40). They persevere and do not give up easily or fall apart under pressure.

Believes All Things

Paul next brings out faith and hope because of their connection with bearing and enduring all things. Faith and hope are the components of love that enable it to endure hardship and to bear up under the heavy burdens of life. In dealing with loved ones, love is not suspicious or cynical, but open

and favorably disposed toward them. It seeks to understand each person in the best light with an understanding of life's complexities. It believes people can change and improve. It sees their worth, potential, and future possibilities. "It studies motives, and makes all possible allowances,"³ says Scroggie. It is not afraid of being proved wrong or being embarrassed by others.

This doesn't imply that love is credulous or blind, for that would be a spurious faith. It is understood, although not directly stated, that love does not believe lies. Jesus' dealings with the Twelve, with their weaknesses and their failures, demonstrate the

Christlike love that believes and hopes all things.

Love also trusts God and his Word and this makes all the difference in how one views and responds to people and difficult problems. Faith views people and life through the lens of God's sovereign purposes for his people. Faith rests assured that "all things work together for good" for those who love God (Rom. 8:28). It believes nothing can "separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:39); "he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6), and nothing is impossible with God.

Hopes All Things

The other core ingredient of love is hope. The situation in the church at Corinth was a mess, but Paul never gives up hope. He doesn't despair. He doesn't walk away from them in frustration. He writes letters, he visits, he sends representatives, and he prays. Despite his stern words, he has confidence that they eventually would respond properly.

Paul expresses his confidence in them: "I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy" (2 Cor. 7:4). "I rejoice, because I have perfect confidence in you" (2 Cor. 7:16; see also 1:7; 2:3; 7:4; 14-16; 10:15).

This confidence is not a sentimental wish; it is faith in God's ultimate triumph and in God's good intentions for his people. This gives him realistic optimism and confidence in the future, even in the face of repeated difficulties and disappointments. Hope in the Lord and trust in his sure promises enable Paul to put problems and failures in perspective (Gal. 5:10; 2 Thess. 3:4; Philem. 21).

Endures All Things

This last quality, endurance, is similar to the first, "bears all things." Love is strong and tenacious: "No hardship or rebuff ever makes love cease to be love."⁴ Love lasts; it holds out; it perseveres in the face of opposition, unkindness, and difficulties; it never gives up. Serving Christ and his people cannot be done without labor and self-sacrifice. Love gives a person the power to endure all things.

The life of Moses, Israel's greatest leader, illustrates that love bears up, believes, hopes, and endures all things. For forty trying years, he led the nation of Israel through the desert of Sinai. The people repeatedly complained about his leadership. They falsely accused him of abuse, ineptitude, evil motives, pride, and even trying to kill them and their children. At one time they were ready to stone him to death. Here are a few examples of their accusations and complaints:

- "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt?... Leave us alone that we

may serve the Egyptians." (Ex. 14:11-12)

- And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron.... "You have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." (Ex. 16:2-3)

- The people quarreled with Moses.... So Moses cried to the Lord, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." (Ex. 17:2-4)

- "Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?" And they said to one another, "Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt." (Num. 14:3-4)

- "Why have you made us come up out of Egypt to bring us to this evil place?" (Num. 20:5)

On one occasion his brother and sister spoke evil against him (Num. 12). They said, "Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he

not spoken through us also" (Num. 12:2). It must have been particularly painful for Moses when his own family and closest confidants attacked him. Yet he forgave them and prayed for their restoration after God judged them for their sinful accusations.

One of the worst moments of Moses' life was when 250 prominent leaders of the nation accused him of sinful, dominating leadership (Num. 16). They said to Moses and Aaron,

You have gone too far! ... Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?... Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land ... to kill us in the wilderness, that you must also make yourself a prince over us? Moreover, you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey. (Num. 16:3, 13-14)

The people outright rejected Moses' authority and appointed a new leader to guide them back to Egypt (Neh. 9:17). On this occasion, Moses prayed to God to punish them for their wickedness, and God did. Their punishment was just and long overdue.

At other times, however, Moses prayed that God would not destroy the people. On four different occasions God was about to destroy the whole nation because of their continual rebellion, but Moses prayed and pleaded with God to spare them.⁵ Moses probably could have thought of a hundred reasons not to pray for them, but as a man of God he was able to rise above personal feelings and pray for their forgiveness and deliverance.

Only love for God and love for the people could explain Moses' forbearance with the children of Israel. Love suffers long, love endures all things, love believes all things, and love hopes all things. Time after time, when it appeared that all was lost for the nation, Moses trusted, hoped, and endured. Selfish leaders, on the other hand, melt like snowflakes when the heat is on. They do not persevere.

Most significant ministry with people is usually long-term, but long-term ministry succeeds only with supernatural power from above to endure all of life's hardships and heartaches. Some missionaries serve for decades in dangerous areas where

the problems and setbacks never end. How do they last? The answer: love for God and love for people. Love generates the faith, hope, and endurance to persevere through a lifetime of problems.

The Greatest Thing in the World

Love's power to endure (1 Cor. 13:7) leads to the final section of chapter 13 (vv. 9-13), where Paul makes two of his most profound declarations about Christian love: "Love never ends" and "faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

Love Is Eternal

1 Cor. 13:8-12
In verse 8, Paul writes, "Love never ends." Technically this is not part of the fifteen descriptions of love in verses 4 through 7. Verse 8 begins a new section that contrasts the temporary nature of spiritual gifts with the permanent nature of love. This brings Paul directly back to his concern over the misuse of spiritual gifts in the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 12:1-13:3).

Love Weathers the Storm

To show again that love is the “more excellent way,” Paul tells his readers that spiritual gifts, no matter how impressive and important they appear, will someday cease: “As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away” (1 Cor. 13:8). There will come a day when spiritual gifts will no longer be needed and will cease. We will not need spiritual gifts in heaven. They are for the present age only. Love, in contrast, will never come to an end. It is for now and eternity.

In the concluding chapter of *Charity and Its Fruits*, Jonathan Edwards describes heaven as “a world of holy love”⁶ and “the paradise of love.”⁷ Heaven will be a home filled forever with love because God is there and “God is love” (1 John 4:8).

When Christians love one another as Jesus did, the local church family prefigures the glories of our future loving, heavenly existence. Sadly, the church at Corinth was not experiencing heavenly love. It was characterized by rivalries, lawsuits, immorality, abuse of Christian liberty, disorderly conduct, pride, and selfish independence—altogether an unacceptably

poor representation of the heavenly realities of love and the fruit of the Spirit.

Love Is the Greatest Virtue

1 Cor. 13:13

The chapter closes with the familiar words: “So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13). Not every Christian is gifted with prophecy, tongues, or knowledge, but every Christian must be characterized by faith, hope, and love. This triad of virtues is fundamental to living the Christian life and to the maturing of the local church (1 Thess. 1:2-3).

Yet even among the three cardinal virtues of faith, hope, and love, Paul can say, “the greatest of these is love.” So whether we are talking about spiritual gifts or cardinal virtues, love is the greatest! This is why every Christian leader and teacher must actively and intentionally “pursue love” (1 Cor. 14:1).

Summary of the Character and Behavior of a Loving Leader

Applying Paul’s fifteen descriptions of

love, we who lead and teach God’s people are to be marked first by patience and kindness, even when we are wronged by those we serve. Our entire ministry is to be characterized by patience and kindness.

We are not to be self-centered leaders who are envious of those who are more talented or more popular than we are. Nor are we to put others down or boast about our own achievements. Most important, we are never to be arrogant and think of ourselves as superior to other people. We are to be humble and modest. We are not to be rude or ill-mannered but always tactful and conscious of proper social decorum. We are especially not to be self-seekers who look out first and foremost for our own interests and advantage. We are to be servants who build others up. We are not to be easily provoked to anger or irritability, which can be emotionally damaging to those we lead. We are to be calm, slow to anger, and never vindictive. We must not hold grudges but rather forgive and be gracious. Finally, we are not to rejoice in wrongdoing of any kind, but we are to rejoice with the truth.

We must always remember that

love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.

A Plea for Self-Examination

I close this section with an important personal plea: Do not use this book to tell other people they have no love. Some of the most loving people I have ever known have been wrongfully accused of a lack of love.

In the Old Testament, the children of Israel accused Moses of unloving domination of the people, although he had saved their lives on many occasions and poured himself out to lead them for forty years. The truth is, the children of Israel were the unloving ones.

Most often, people who say that others have no love are themselves the ones most lacking. They think the new commandment says, “Love me or I’ll destroy you and your church.” They sit around waiting for other people to love them.

How easy it is to see the speck of lovelessness in another’s eye but miss the log of self-centeredness, hypocrisy, and anger in your own eye (Matt. 7:3-5). Use this article, therefore, to speak to yourself. Strive to be an example to

others of love according to the “more excellent way.” And when a situation arises that demands confronting loveless behavior, you will have credibility as well as the skill to confront, “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15).

If we are honest, we must admit that we all have failed to love as we ought. So we should judge ourselves first. Only after we have confessed and repented of our own sins of lovelessness can we begin to help others to love. A good way to do that is to pray for them, because only God can change hearts.

Of course, even loving people do unloving things at times. They get into terrible conflicts and are not what they should be. Martin Luther, the sixteenth-century reformer, was a selfless, loving man, but he could also at times be cutting and harsh. The only perfectly loving person to grace this earth was the Lord Jesus Christ. The rest of us struggle all our lives to love as he loved and to figure out exactly how to love in difficult situations. †

Notes to Chapter 9

1. Each of the four verbs has as its object the Greek word *panta*, “all things.” However, the accusative case here “stands almost in the sense of an adverb”: “always” or “in everything”

(BDAG, s.v. *pas*, 783). The NIV and a number of commentators prefer this adverbial rendering. This avoids the idea that love gullibly believes “all things” and hopes “all things.” It is difficult to be certain of the translation.

2. The Greek verb *stegō* can mean either (1) “covers,” as in covering another’s faults (NIV: “protects”) or (2) “bears up under difficulty.” Either meaning is possible here; however, the latter follows Paul’s usage (1 Cor. 9:12; 1 Thess. 3:1, 5) and is favored.

3. W. Graham Scroggie, *The Love Life: A Study of 1 Corinthians 13* (London: Pickering & Inglis, n.d.), 46.

4. C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, HNTC (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 305.

5. Ex. 32:10-14; Num. 14:12-20; 16:20-22, 41-50.

6. Jonathan Edwards, *Charity and Its Fruits* (1852; reprint ed., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1978), 325. 7. *Ibid.*, 351.

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Alexander Strauch

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Love Weathers the Storm

Dr. MacLeod Asks

Faculty member Dave MacLeod leads us in a public forum to discuss issues pertinent to contemporary Christian life. Last issue he asked the following question:

Perhaps the best treatment of believer's baptism currently available is a new book edited by Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright entitled, *Believer's Baptism* (B & H Publishing, Nashville, 2006). One of the chapters, "Baptism in the Context of the Local Church," by Mark E. Dever, addresses the question of access to the Lord's Table. Dever, pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington D.C., would close the Table to those Christians who had not been baptized as believers but had only experienced "evangelical infant baptism." Dever believes that the failure to obey Christ's call to be baptized "calls into question the claim of being Christ's follower (since Christ commanded baptism in Matt. 28:19-20). Even if the disobedience is unintentional (as in the case of an evangelical infant baptism), it is still sin and cannot be countenanced by the church" (340). Should we regard conscientious paedobaptists, that is, those who sprinkle infants, as "disobedient" and guilty of "sin" for not being baptized following faith in Christ. Should they be granted access to the Lord's Table?

Mark Albertson Responds

Does the New Testament impose a baptismal requirement on believers before they partake of the Lord's Table? No, it does not. If the New Testament knows no such requirement, then men should not invent one. This is exactly the kind of thing that the Pharisees of Jesus' day did, building the traditions of men around the Word of God. "And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9).

Also, imposing this kind of restriction on partaking of the Lord's Table displays a misunderstanding of what life in Christ is all about. First, this kind of restriction makes it sound as if committing one sin disqualifies one from a particular sacrament. And why does this particular "sin" disqualify someone? What about other sins a person commits? Do those sins also call "into question the claim of being Christ's follower" and if not, why not? What is it about this particular "sin" that disqualifies? If sinning disqualifies one from partaking of the Lord's Supper then none of us should partake. Not one of us is acceptable to God outside of the work of Christ. If one is barred from partaking of the Lord's Table then we are all barred. But the Lord invites us to His table. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 1 Cor. 11:28

This brings us to a second misunderstanding. Restricting someone from participating in the Lord's

Table and admitting those who have jumped through a particular "spiritual hoop" smacks of a performance-based acceptance before God. Again, we are back to a legalistic, Pharisaical and unbiblical idea about how Christians should live. The Christian life is not about the believer's performance, but about walking in the Spirit as evidenced by the following verses:

"Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?" (Gal. 3:2-3). "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him" (Col. 2:6).

Do we not see this? The Christian life is not about checking off boxes and doing our "Christian duty." Romans 10:4 says that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. The Christian life is about Christ. He is our life (Col. 3:4). As we walk by faith and pursue Him, we will obey the commandments. "He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:3-4).

There is yet a third misunderstanding, and it is this. Restricting access to some and allowing access to others assumes that we can somehow "become worthy" to participate in the things of God. A believer who is baptized in the "acceptable manner" has become worthy of the Lord's Table whereas someone who has not had no such experience is not (yet) worthy? Where is that concept found in the Bible? The good news is that we can't get any closer to God than we already are.

The New Testament testifies repeatedly that the work of Christ has made us completely acceptable to God.

We are the elect of God, holy and beloved (Col. 3:12). We are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God (Eph. 2:19). We are saints (Phil. 1:1), ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20) and joint heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17). We are the workmanship of God (Eph. 2:10). We are partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). We've been given all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3) and we are complete in Him (Col. 2:10). How could anyone restrict access to the Lord's Table to ones such as these?

Mark Albertson
Tucson, Arizona

David MacLeod Comments

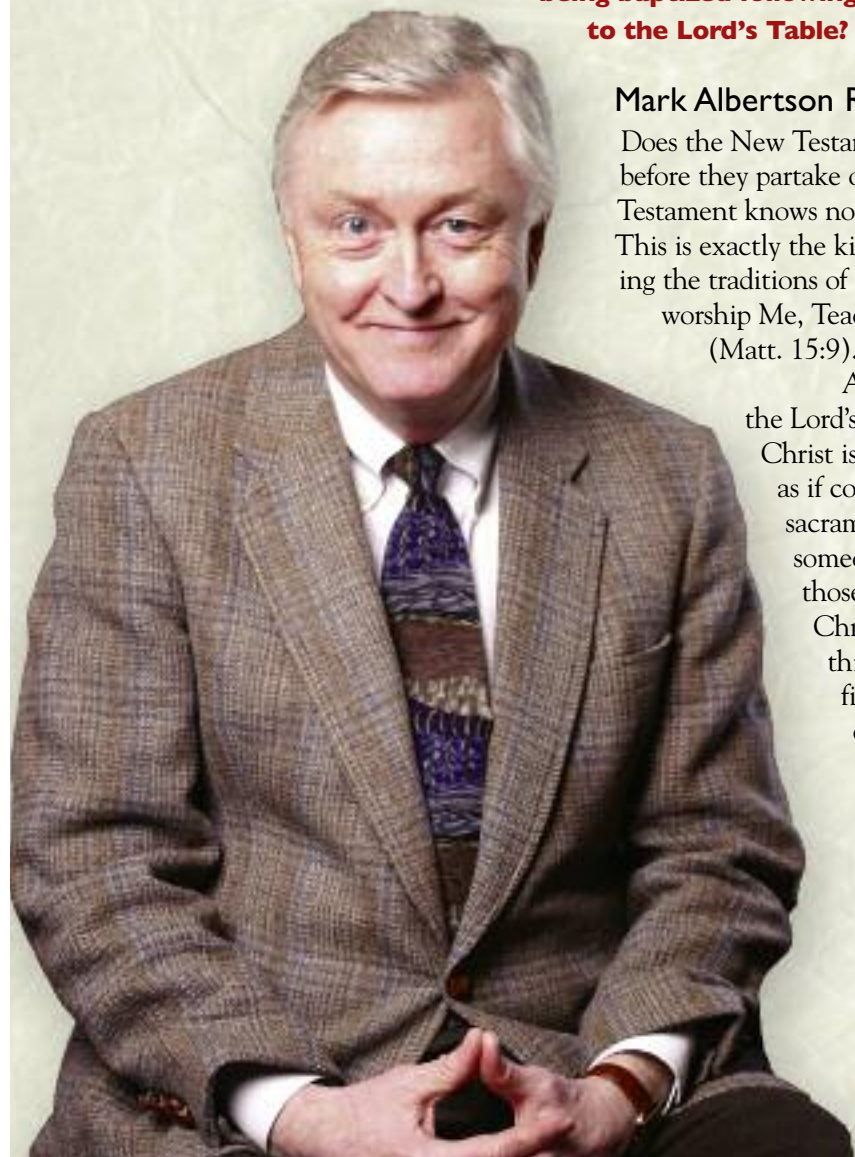
Brother Mark evidently believes that paedobaptists should be welcome at the Lord's Table. In making his case, however, he seems to question the importance of baptism altogether. Our Lord's words in the Great Commission assume that believers will be baptized, and this rite is to be included in "all that I commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). Credo-baptism ("believer's baptism") is the representation (i.e., one's identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection through immersion in water) and confession of one's entrance into the church through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ's atoning work. It is a symbol of what Christ does through His Spirit in placing us into His body the church (1 Cor. 12:13). Having said this I personally agree with

those who argue that evangelical paedobaptists are "wrong" about baptism, but not disobedient. They are believers in Christ and all spiritual blessings are theirs—including the baptism of the Spirit, which placed them into the body of Christ, the church. I would also add, however, in response to Brother Mark, that there are sins that bar a believer from participation in the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 5:11; cf. Matt. 18:15-17).

Faith Haynes Responds

It is evident in the Scriptures that our Lord commanded His disciples to follow Him in baptism. It's also clear that He instituted communion. However, the tradition which Mark E. Dever and numerous evangelicals practice—including myself—that baptism must precede partaking of our Lord's Table is largely inferential. I could be wrong, but I don't know which Scriptures explicitly teach that this practice is the correct sequence. Of course, not all Christians are of the same mind, which apparently is why Dever took pains to advocate the closing of communion to those who have not been "properly" baptized. Procedural technicalities aside, I wonder about the effect of language upon Christian practice and attitudes, particularly about baptism and the Lord's Supper. I wonder if there would be a widespread shift in attitudes if non-liturgical churches incorporated the term Sacrament in addition to or instead of the term Ordinance. I wonder, would church behavior change if our language changed? Would more Christians view baptism and the Lord's Supper as special, not merely perfunctory?

Traditionally, Plymouth



Brethren and other denominations are uncomfortable, if not squeamish, with any notions of rites, as suggested by the term sacrament. However, one of the definitions for ordinance as given in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary is “a prescribed usage, practice, or ceremony”—a ritualistic-sounding definition. Furthermore, an ordinance is also defined as “an authoritative decree or direction...ordained by deity.” Some of us, totally depraved sinners that we are, resent being told what to do—even if ordered by our Lord. Is it any wonder that some Christians unconsciously retain a rules-are-meant-to-be-broken attitude regarding baptism or communion?

Sacraments on the other hand are, well, sacred. They’re rites “...ordained by Christ and ... held to be a means of divine grace or to be a sign or symbol of a spiritual reality.” Non-liturgical Evangelicals might disagree with Merriam-Webster on the part about the “means of divine grace.” Even Anglicans and Lutherans have slightly different interpretations on the “means of divine grace” in non-salvific ways.

While the Scriptures are clear about the mandates of baptism by immersion and the Lord’s Table, it’s not clear which must be done first. There doesn’t seem to be clear Scriptural references which preclude un-baptized believers from partaking from the Lord’s Supper, yet Dever is right to be concerned that some Christians have not been baptized as believers. Evangelical churches typically are faithful in

stressing the importance of obedience to Christ’s commands. I wonder whether if churches also emphasized the sacredness of baptism (as well as communion), that is, that it is “set apart for service or worship,” then perhaps a widespread shift in attitudes would follow. After all, what believer doesn’t want to be holy and sacred?

In the last issue of Journey, both David Glock and Norman Geisler spoke about absolute truth. Both said, “... Truth is an idea, and ideas only exist in minds. And if there’s an absolute truth, there must be an absolute mind in which truth resides.” Baptism and communion are truths that originated in Christ’s mind. They are holy truths. And if we embrace them as sacred, I think we will live out those truths so that we will show that we love Christ and sacredly keep His ordinances.

Faith Foster Haynes
Allen, Texas

David MacLeod Comments

Mrs. Haynes was one of my better students at Emmaus, but like many of my students, she prefers to answer her own questions and not that of her teacher. My question is, “Should born again paedobaptists be barred from the Lord’s Supper in Mark Dever’s church?” She apparently disagrees with Dever’s position, but would prefer to set “procedural technicalities” aside to get on with the debate over the use of the word sacrament. Many evangelicals use the terms sacrament and ordinance interchangeably. Others insist on the word ordinance in that

sacrament is loaded down with Catholic thinking about the “means of grace.” In Catholic theology the sacraments operate *ex opere operato* (“by the work performed”). Churchly performance of the sacramental rites conveys grace to the recipient. In short, they remove sins. The sacraments themselves have a *virtus operativa* (“operating power”). Evangelicals, holding that baptism and the Lord’s Supper are symbolic rites, the former indicating one’s initiation into the body of Christ, and the latter indicating his continuance in the body of Christ, deny that the mere performance of a rite will convey grace.

Mark Kimsey-Lanigan Responds

For those of us who believe and have experienced the Life of God through His Mystical and Sacramental presence in the regenerating waters of Baptism, we would never consider the baptizing of infants as being sinful, nor exclude them from the Lord’s Table. According to the Oxford dictionary, a mystic is a person who seeks by contemplation and self-surrender to obtain unity, identity with, absorption into the Deity, the ultimate reality; or who believes in the Spiritual apprehension of truths that are beyond the understanding.

Regarding the word Sacrament, the Oxford dictionary states that it is a religious ceremony or act of the Christian churches regarded as an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual grace (which includes seven rites). In modern theological circles there is a great danger of

allowing rationalism to replace faith. The great Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 4:7, “And the peace of God which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Our Lord states that we must be like little children to enter the Kingdom of Heaven and was much displeased when His disciples tried to prevent the babies (brephoi) from coming to him to receive His Divine blessing. Therefore, little children are baptized in the faith of the Church and to be catechized as they grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 18:3–4; Mark 10:13–16; Luke 18:15–17; John 3:5; Acts 2:38–39; Eph. 1:13; 5:26; 6:17; Tit. 3:4–6; 1 Pet. 2:2, 3:21). Scripture makes it clear that faith is a supernatural gift from God and that spiritual apprehension transcends human reasoning.

Mark Kimsey-Lanigan
Princeton, Idaho

David MacLeod Comments

Dr. Kimsey-Lanigan, himself a paedobaptist, understandably does not agree with Mark Dever’s exclusion of paedobaptists from the Lord’s Supper. Dr. Kimsey-Lanigan also considers himself a mystic, and this makes it difficult to discuss Scripture with him because mystical experiences are ineffable, i.e., incapable of being described or put into words. In Acts 11:14, however, the gospel comes in words, which must be believed. Although we cannot fully comprehend God, the Bible says He may be known (John 17:3; 2 Tim. 12). To point out to a mystic that the New Testament commands two sacraments or ordinances, that the word to baptize (*baptizō*) means “to dip, immerse,” that the notion that there are seven sacraments cannot be traced much earlier than the 11th century; that the explicitly New Testament examples of baptism involve believing adults; and that the apostles do not speak of salvation as deification or absorption into the Deity would be irrelevant to him because he has a spiri-

tual apprehension that transcends human reasoning. As F. F. Bruce once observed, people who have mystical experiences tend to attach more importance to what they learned through such experiences than to the sober truth of the Word of God. One further note: absorption into the Deity or the dissolution-of-self-in-God is an idea indebted to eastern religion and not Christian Scripture. The Christian looks forward to the resurrection of the body and not a literal or ontological merging of his finite self with God.

NEXT ISSUE’S QUESTION:

When I was in my late teens there was quite a debate at youth camp over the need to be baptized before one could participate in the Lord’s Supper. As I remember it was decided that the young people should abide by the guidelines of their home assemblies. If one’s assembly required baptism then he could participate only if he was baptized. If his assembly did not require baptism then he could participate whether or not he was baptized. In either case it was assumed that only born again believers would take part. In the current issue of Journey Magazine, Faith Foster Haynes suggests there are no explicit grounds in the New Testament for assuming that baptism must precede partaking at the Lord’s Table. Do you agree with her suggestion, or do you have evidence to the contrary?

Please send responses to Journey Magazine, Emmaus Bible College, 2570 Asbury Road, Dubuque, IA 52001, or e-mail to journey@emmaus.edu. Include name, city, state, and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited to yield brevity and clarity.

Love's Call to Repentance

By Chris Lange



I recall those days when I was first saved. It was definitely not a “new lease on life.” Quite the contrary, it was an all new life. As believers, we remember those dawn-breaking days, filled with the emotional abandon of the truth of salvation and forgiveness. I remember well my father waking my brother and me up that next morning, after our long night of confession and prayer, with my brother’s spiritual guidance. He was amused by the decision I had made, smiling at both of us, enjoying his sons in an early morning moment...but he was not one of us, then. He would not confess Christ for another 13 years, shortly before he died. Though he loved us, he couldn’t possibly know the awe and excitement of being loved by God. I recall reading in those first few days, “We love, because He first loved us” (1 Jn. 4:19). It was enough to light my heart on fire for the things of God. No fear in love, no checks on the unbridled enthusiasm of a new believer, no need to be told to love God with my whole heart.

Wonder-filled days they were. And many have been since then. But time has its own way of dulling those ecstatic days, both refining and subduing my Christian childhood experiences and memories. That was 40 years ago. Of course, I love my Father in heaven with my whole heart, but the intensity and disposition of my

heart seem different now. When I read in Revelation 2: 1-5 how Jesus upbraids the church at Ephesus for losing their first love, I am sorely checked by the implication that His knowledge of me and of my life may bring the same scrutiny and judgment. Have I lost my first love? Have the things of this world and the rhythms of the age in which I live so influenced me that I have allowed subtle idolatry into my soul? Even my denial of the possibility cannot ease my spiritual conscience when I reflect on how my years go by, how they may contain more of this world’s “goods,” more of America’s pride of life.

I recall, as well, first time readings of 1 John 2: “Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in Him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world” (vv. 15-16, NASB). These words of our Lord were revolutionary and sobering to me as a young believer. So also were the chiding remarks the Lord gave the Pharisees in Luke 16: 14-15. As lovers of money, their self-justifying motives were clear before Jesus: money was power in the eyes of men. “You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly

esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.” For a young Christian, these words were just as provocative for me, I who had so recently been translated from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of His beloved Son.

So when I read Revelation 2, I cannot help but take it personally. I believe it is dangerously naïve for a believer in America today not to be checked in spirit by this admonition. The subconscious subversion of Satan’s work here on earth is not meted out solely on unbelievers, and it is insidious and persistent. I have a great respect for the power of the world’s system in my life. Shall we pray together that none of us wanes in his or her love for Jesus, succumbing to the attraction to worldly counterfeits? Join me at the break of day as I do just that. †



Chris Lange

Chris Lange teaches history, English composition and literature at Emmaus where he has served on the faculty since 2000. Chris and his wife Nancy have four grown children and are enjoying their two grandsons and new granddaughter.



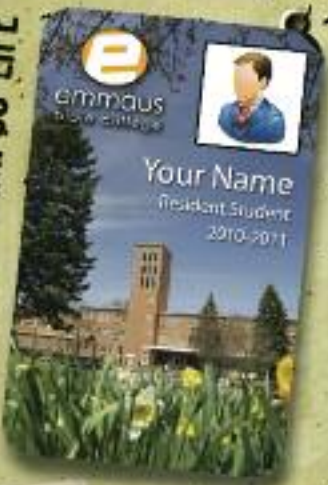
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Name	Dates	Location/Events	City/State
 Ken Daughters	Oct 3 Oct 10, 17 Oct 24 Oct 29 - Nov 3 Nov 21 Dec 19	Bible Truth Chapel Warrenville Bible Chapel Park of the Palms Tieton Drive Bible Chapel Gwinnett Bible Chapel Woodside Bible Chapel	Wausau, WI Warrenville, IL Keystone Heights, FL Yakima, WA Lilburn, GA Maywood, IL
 Ken Fleming	Oct 3, Dec 19	Bayside Community Church	Tampa, FL
 Dave Glock	Nov 12 – 14 Nov 20, 21 Dec 4, 5	Park of the Palms Hutchinson Gospel Chapel Emmaus Bible Chapel	Keystone Heights, FL Hutchinson, KS St. Louis, MO
 Jon Glock	Oct 24, 31 Nov 5 – 7	Warrenville Bible Chapel Sandy Creek Bible Camp	Warrenville, IL Washington, TX
 Dave MacLeod	Oct 3, 10, 17, 24, 31	Arbor Oaks Bible Chapel	Dubuque, IA
 Ben Mathew	Oct 10, 17 Nov 5 – 7	Park Manor Bible Chapel Sandy Creek Bible Camp	Elgin, IL Washington, TX
 Donnie Patten	Oct 31, Nov 7	Fenton Crossing Bible Chapel	St. Louis, MO

Journey | On the Road

Emmaus On the Road

Name	Dates	Location/Events	City/State
 Dan Smith	Oct 3, 10	Northwest Bible Chapel	Chicago, IL
	Oct 16	Lake Geneva Camp	Lake Geneva, WI
	Oct 17	Wauwatosa Bible Chapel	Wauwatosa, WI
	Oct 24	Bayside Community Church	Tampa, FL
	Nov 4 - 7	Ireland Outreach	Orlando, FL
 Mark Stevenson	Oct 10, 17, 24	Woodside Bible Chapel	Maywood, IL
 Steve Witter	Oct 3, 10	Oak Lawn Bible Chapel	Oak Lawn, IL
	Oct 24-26	Cascade Community Church	Gresham, OR
	Nov 5, 6	Willowbrook Bible Camp	Des Moines, IA
	Nov 28	Hokah Community Church	Hokah, MN
	Dec 12	Asbury Community Chapel	Asbury, IA
 Mark Woodhouse	Nov 28	Northwest Bible Fellowship	Omaha, NE

If you would like more information about having faculty speak at your assembly, retreat, conference or camp please call 1-800-397-BIBLE or e-mail info@emmaus.edu.



FROM THE DISK OF
DR. STEVE WITTER

Dear Friends,

The campus here in Dubuque has come alive again. The students have arrived, and we begin another academic year here at Emmaus. We are thankful for each and every student, and trust that they will receive the full benefit of the Emmaus Experience and that we will see: Lives Changed. Character Shaped. Purpose Found.

We are always cognizant of our need to depend on the Lord, and this fact is clearly before us as this new academic year starts. While our enrollment numbers have remained somewhat steady, we had planned for enrollment growth this year. Our budget assumed a larger increase of students, and as a result, we begin the school year with an almost \$300,000 budget shortfall in income from student fees. The President's Cabinet has already begun work on reduction of expenses, but because the budget was economical, even small cuts will be significant.

Our income has primarily two sources. First, there is the income from students when they pay tuition, room/board, and fees. Second, there is income through gifts from the Lord's people. Supporters of the college give **unrestricted** gifts, which are gifts to the general fund which we use to operate the college and pay routine expenses. We also receive a significant number of **restricted** gifts each year. These are gifts that are designated for a particular purpose. Examples of these would be the gifts you sent to help us build the science lab, replace broken windows, or for student financial aid. These gifts are important to us, and their use is **restricted** to the purpose given. If we had more student financial aid, we could enroll more students. Finally there are **estate gifts**. These are gifts that are given to the college by someone that has gone home to be with the Lord, but who wanted to continue their partnership, even in death.

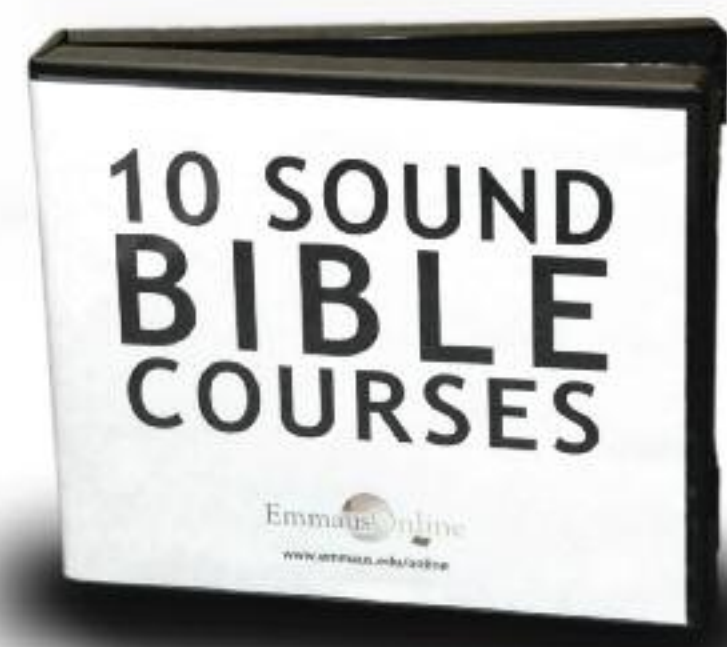
So, how can you help? I'm glad you asked! First, **PRAY**. Pray for the Lord's provision for our needs throughout this year. We need HIS help and supply. Pray for wisdom as we reduce expenditures. Also pray for the NCA accreditation visit in November. We are seeking reaffirmation of our accreditation for 10 years. Second, **PROCLAIM!** Alumni, parents, and supporters such as you are some of BEST recruiters we have. Tell your story to a prospective student. Tell him why YOU think time at Emmaus is time well spent. Send us contact information and we'll work together to provide the Emmaus Experience for him. Remember, students are more than welcome to enroll or transfer at the beginning of the second semester. Third, **PARTNER**. Consider how the Lord could use you to help us financially. We see a tremendous need for Emmaus to continue to teach "...the things concerning Himself." The Lord has blessed and sustained us these many years. We look forward to see how HE will provide for us this coming year. If you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Because HE lives,

Steven R. Witter, PhD
Vice-President for Advancement



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