

02-08-11a Revelation

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There are three nouns that are used by the Lord Jesus in speaking to the church at Ephesus in Revelation chapter 2, verses 1-7 that are also found in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians. And there is another characteristic that Jesus mentions concerning the Ephesian church that is also found here. And I find it quite illuminating to compare Paul's statements and the content of his letter to Thessalonica here with what Jesus says in his letter to Ephesus.

So be watching for that. This is a letter from Paul Silas or Silvanus as we find it here in Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then beginning at 1 Thessalonians 1-2, Paul says, We give thanks to God always for you, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, your labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father. Notice each of those nouns followed by a prepositional phrase. Work, labor, and patience.

The same three words, erga, kopos, and hupomone that Jesus mentions in Ephesus. He says, I remember without ceasing those things. Knowing, beloved brethren, your choosing by God, your election by God.

For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance. How does this relate to what we've seen of the Ephesian church in Revelation chapter 2? What does Jesus note about them that they have been faithful in doing? They have identified and weeded out false teaching, false apostles. How do they distinguish? What is the distinguishing feature of a true apostle, a true bearer of divine truth? It comes not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance.

As you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place.

Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come. For you yourselves know,

brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, or not in emptiness, in shallowness.

But even after we had suffered before, and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict. For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit. But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but, and you could put in brackets, pleasing God, who tests our hearts.

For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness. God is witness. How often do you hear that kind of preaching today when you turn on Christian media, when you see Christian books and various other forms of communication where it is a cloak for covetousness.

It's a way to bring money into the coffers. Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. All of these were distinguishing features of false apostles.

They used their message as a cloak for covetousness. They used it to start personality cults and to start followings and to gain influence and glory. They would flatter.

They would cajole. They would encourage. They would tickle the itching ears.

They would say what people wanted to hear and fill houses and fill auditoriums and fill outdoor. You've seen the amphitheaters that existed in ancient Greece and Rome. And these men would come and fill those with people who wanted to hear, much as it is today.

True versus false communicators, true versus false apostles. But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.

For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil. For laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe, you who trust, as you know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and his own glory.

For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who are exercising faith. You who believe, that's a present. You who are believing.

You who keep on trusting. This is not just distinguishing believers from unbelievers in a salvation

sense. The word of God effectively works in those who make it the object of their faith on an ongoing basis, as a pattern of life.

For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea, in Christ Jesus. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans, their countrymen. And remember, the establishment, the existing forms of religion, are going to persecute those who follow Christ in faith, those who become genuine disciples.

You can expect, now our persecution takes a very mild form. We are not persecuted to the point of shedding blood, are we? We are not incarcerated. We don't suffer the loss of our possessions.

We do not have mobs coming. We don't have Kristallnacht, where someone comes and breaks the windows of our business, burns down our home, that kind of thing. These who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets and have persecuted us, they do not please God, and they are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles so that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins.

But wrath has come upon them to the uttermost. And by the time Paul is writing here, the Judean church and the synagogues, the Jews who persecuted the Judean church, they've been scattered. They've been destroyed.

The government of Rome came down upon them, and God used that implement much as he did in Old Testament days. God would bring in a foreign power, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, to discipline his people. And the persecution of the church by the synagogue and the temple and the Pharisees and the Judaizers resulted in national discipline on what was left of Israel.

And Paul makes an allusion to that. Look at verse 17. We, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, but not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire.

Therefore we wanted to come to you, even I, Paul, time and again. But Satan hindered us, for what is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For you are our glory and joy. And Paul says there is nothing that creates greater joy and rejoicing, both now and in the presence of the returning Jesus Christ, than the response of believers to the teaching of the word of God, to the truth that is in God's word.

It is a joy to those who plow the fields and try to bring the truth to those who are eager to hear and who make it the object of their faith. And that's what he's talking about. This is what John talks about in his epistles when you read 1 and 2 and 3 John, when he says that our joy may be full.

He wants to impart even more truth. You remember the meeting with the Ephesian elders when Paul comes to Miletus, he's on his way to Rome, and he calls the Ephesian elders to himself. You

remember that in Acts chapter 19 and Acts chapter 20.

Very similar sentiments to what he expresses to the Thessalonian church in appealing to his manner of life and his example. And beginning in Acts 20 verse 17 and following, we read this about the testimony that Paul gave. He says in verse 26, I testify to you this day, this is Acts 20, 26, I am innocent of the blood of all men.

I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Take heed to yourself and all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with his own blood. For I know this, after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

And among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after themselves, false apostles, false leaders. Therefore watch and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone, night and day, with tears. I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

And you will note that he doesn't say, I commend you to God who has given you an inheritance. There is a widely held belief that all believers are overcomers. There is a widely held belief that all believers of the church age are heirs and receive all of the overcomer blessings.

Everything that is promised, everything that is alluded to in the New Testament Scriptures as inheritance and blessing and all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places, it is widely held, almost universally held, that these things belong to all who are in Christ. And it is an appealing argument. It is an argument that seems to make sense when they say, well, don't these things all depend on the work of Christ? We are hopeless and helpless and useless.

And it ties into sort of the Reformed idea that it is God that is at work in you to will and to do his good purpose. And so God sort of came to you. There is efficacious grace.

We sang the hymn last Sunday where we had to sort of talk about the verses that say, I know not why the Holy Spirit created faith in me and I know not why God chose in grace to impart faith to me. I love the sentiment of that hymn where it quotes almost verbatim the Apostle Paul, I know whom I have believed. I know that he is able to keep that, that I have committed to him against that day.

But the details of the verses of that hymn you have to watch because it is Reformed. It is Calvinistic in its theological persuasion. It says, I don't know why God, it is just a mystery to me, why out of all the mass of unsaved, hopeless, helpless, depraved human beings you chose me.

But there is always in the back of that an inkling that there is sort of almost a false humility. Well, there must have been something because God chose me and he didn't choose that guy over

there. And that leads to the idea that because God sovereignly chose certain ones and God has the elect that he is going to bring to glory, he is going to glorify them all because God's grace doesn't come by measure, which flies in the face of Scripture.

I can show you passages where he says that God has measured out to each one according to the measure of spiritual gifts. And each one has been given a measure of faith. We don't have time to go there.

I can't go down that road. But the point here is we decide. We have been given an opportunity.

It is like the children of Israel coming out of the land of Egypt. Some went into the land and some did not. Following the Reformed argument, all of those who came out of Egypt should have entered the land.

Did God not bring them out by the blood? Did he not bring them through the sea? Did he not sustain them with manna? Did he not guide them with the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night? Did he not set up the priesthood? Did he not give them his tabernacle? Did he not put his ark among them? Did he not do all of these things for every single individual that came out of Egypt? The answer is yes, he did. Why then did only two individuals, not even Moses, walk across on dry ground the Jordan River to enter the land of promise? Only Caleb and Joshua. Why? Because it is not a sovereignly decided, eternity past, predestination that determines where you and I end up both now and in the millennium and in the eternal future to come.

We have been equally provided with opportunity. We have been equally provided for by God's grace the logistics of the provision of the Spirit and the Word are the heritage and the promise and the gift to every believer in Christ. We all have the same opportunity.

But like every field of human endeavor, it is what you do with what you have that determines where you end up. What do you do with what you've been given? That is the theme of the New Testament. It is the theme of the epistles of Paul.

It is the theme of the epistles of the Lord Jesus Christ to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3. That is why each letter from Christ to the church ends with, To him that overcomes I will grant. That means that some will overcome and some will not. And to overcome, how can you make that a synonym for salvation? A Calvinist, a Reformed theologian, would argue hotly that you have not overcome anything.

You are a helpless, hapless victim of God's efficacious grace in receiving salvation. How can you be called? Well, we overcome, we share the victory of Christ, and so on. They have their arguments.

But look at the logic. Jesus says, I look at you. Five out of the seven of these letters, he says, I know.

Oida. I have observed. I know something about you.

And he says, I commend you for these. I fault you for these. It is an evaluation.

And he says, Then there is an exhortation. Remember from where you have fallen. Do the first works, or else I will come and remove your lampstand out of its place.

How can you see that as anything but an exhortation to metanoia? To change your mind. Jesus doesn't say, Wait for me to change your mind. Stand fast until I change your mind.

He doesn't say, My Father is at work in you, and be patient. You will soon be an overcomer. Why would there be imperatives in Scripture? Reformed theology says, Well, that's just sort of a, that's just the trigger that is used to activate the implanted, engrafted faith that God has already put in you, and is just laying dormant.

It's like a sleeper agent that is already there. It's just waiting for the word to be activated. Well, why does God confuse us with this roundabout, if that were true? Why does he tempt us to think that we are involved in some fashion with this roundabout mechanism? For God to be glorified, why does God not just reach down and stick his hand into the puppet and move it? Instead of saying, Well, I've placed this hidden thing in you, and then I'm going to speak a word, and it's going to come alive.

But just remember, it's all my decision, and some of you I've elected, and some I have not. It's just, it's ludicrous. And it's unfortunate because it has, as its motivation and as its explanation in Reformed circles, a desire to credit the grace of God and to acknowledge that we have nothing that we have not received.

And that's a healthy thing. But any healthy thing that you take and push to an extreme can become unhealthy. You can take any doctrine of the Word of God, overblow it and unbalance it, and be in error.

There are people who overemphasize grace to the point that they don't feel the need to respond to any of the injunctions and imperatives of Scripture. There are people who explain away the whole epistle of 1 John and say, I don't need to confess my sins. My sins were all taken care of at the cross.

That's arrogance on my part to think that I need to do something more. Is the work of Christ incomplete? Do I need to add something to the work of Christ? It's all, 1 John is salvation. Confessing your sins, that's salvation.

I don't have to do anything about my sins now. You're saying the cross is not complete. And it's overblowing, it's unbalancing by taking some doctrine.

Liberty or license. How many sermons, how many books have been preached on Paul's teaching

about all things are lawful, but not all things are edifying? If you overemphasize grace, there are churches that profess a teaching emphasis that have a problem with drunkenness and revelry at church functions because they say, all things are lawful, we can drink. And there are people, they've got a bar at the church.

I went to a church that had a wet bar. And at social functions, wedding receptions, people were bending their elbows. And liberty in Christ, all things are lawful.

And forgetting the part, all things are not edifying. The Christian life is a life of balance. You can take anything that is legitimate.

I had someone talking to me earlier this week about a particular aspect of function and saying, well this is just as legal as it can be. It's something that has to do with ethics and with the way you function as a Christian and in the non-profit world. And I said, well, there's no law against this.

It's perfectly legitimate to do this thing. Well, my response, which I did not verbalize, but in my mind it came to me, take any two people who are married, but not to each other. There's a woman that's married to a man, and here's a man that's married to a woman.

Well, take that man and woman who each have their own marriage. It's perfectly legal for one of them to go rent a motel room. It's perfectly legal for both of them to walk into that motel room and have a meeting over something.

Nothing illegal about that. That meeting might last well into the evening. They might work into the wee hours and get tired, and they might both sleep in that motel room.

Perfectly legal, but is that right? No, not at all. The Bible says avoid the appearance of evil. You can take your liberty.

Against such there is no law. What is it that we look at that is lawful? It's the fruit of the Spirit. We have to be careful.

We have to avoid the appearance of evil. We have to recognize that you cannot take your liberty and turn it into a sin. Any area of life, parents with their children, you can spend too much time with your children and neglect your marriage.

You can spend too much time with your spouse and neglect your children. Work is a healthy thing. God says, Man shall earn his bread by the sweat of his brow.

But a man can over-invest himself in his work and neglect his family. He can over-invest himself in his family and neglect his work. A pastor can over-invest himself in his teaching ministry and neglect his pastoral function.

He can over-emphasize the pastoral function and neglect his teaching ministry. There are so

many different areas. You can over-blow prayer.

You can spend all day long in prayer and neglect your other duties. Balance, balance, balance in every different area of life. If you find yourself excessively preoccupied with any one thing, it's worth a second look.

That's the message here in these letters. And in the injunction, the Apostle Paul says, Look, you have got to watch out. You've got to pay attention to what the Word of God teaches.

But the thing that he notes in Thessalonica in particular is you have this work. And we've already seen in Revelation chapter 2, to which we now return for our lesson this morning, that the Lord Jesus Christ commends the church at Ephesus for their work, there it says, I know your works, your labor, your patience, in the New King James. And we've seen the work there is erga.

Paul in Thessalonians says, your work of faith. Jesus commends their labor. And Paul says in Thessalonians, this is a labor of love.

And notice, in fact, it's not conclusive, but a strong grammatical argument can be made here. And I didn't point this out before. But the way the Greek syntax works out here, it is probable that when Jesus says, I know your works, your ergas, your erga, that the labor and patience are the description of that work.

That this is not three separate things, but their works are constituted of labor and perseverance. That's what the specific works are that Jesus is talking about. And you can remember that when he says, you've lost your first love, what does Paul talk about to the Thessalonians? He says, your work.

We give thanks remembering your work of faith and your labor of love. The undergirding of those works is faith. What does faith have as its object? The word of God.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the incarnate word. But we exercise faith. We treat as reality what? What is our reality? What should our reality be as believers? What we see, what we experience, what people say, the common wisdom? No, it's the word of God.

Our works, the things that we do, ought to be based on what the word of God teaches us. Well, both in Ephesus and in Thessalonica, they had that teaching. They had weeded out the false teaching and they had the right stuff.

That's what we like to think in the teaching traditions, as my friend up in Tulsa calls it, the doctrinal movement. There was a resurgence out of the Baraka church and its ministries and people who go to Dallas Seminary and some of the other real strong expository preaching and teaching emphasis in the church. You have churches that are very strong.

The Bible church movement would try to be a return to just getting the word of God and treating

that as the object of faith. We pride ourselves on getting it right. We make an emphasis out of pride ourselves.

It's probably a bad way of putting it. It certainly is bad if that's what we end up doing. But we know the importance of the word of God and we try as best we can to get it right, to rightly divide the word of truth.

Well, that was a characteristic in Thessalonica. That was a characteristic in Ephesus. But what happened in Ephesus? Jesus says, you've done a good job.

You weeded out the false doctrines. You got rid of the false apostles. You identified them.

You expelled them. Good job. Way to go.

And you've got your works going on here and they're based on the right word of God. You're doing things that are proper in the light of the word of God. That's great.

But what did Paul say in 1 Thessalonians 1.3? Remembering all the time your work of faith. That's our ergo or erga. He says your labor of love.

And this is what dropped out in Ephesus. In Thessalonica, remember that was one of the strongest churches to which Paul wrote. The Thessalonian letters are to a group of mature believers that are by and large doing things right.

He doesn't rebuke. He doesn't have to do a lot of correcting there. He does a lot of commending because the Thessalonian church is one of the strongest.

Your labor of love. Your labor that is motivated by love. This is what dropped out in Ephesus.

He says you've lost your first love. You're still doing the works and they're still correct, but your motivation has changed. Your heart isn't the same as when you first started doing these things.

You're still correct. You're still checking your standards. You're still eliminating the errors and that's wonderful, but you've lost the love and that makes them a different kind of works.

They're not the same works as they were at the first and that's why he says you've got to return to the works you did at first. Go back to the works you did at first. Remember therefore, he says in Revelation 2.5, from where you have fallen, you can be doing the same things.

To all appearances nothing has changed and yet you've fallen. You know they have that thing for the clapper or whatever it is. I've fallen and I can't get up.

The old lady falls down. I've fallen and I can't get up. You're supposed to wear this thing that you can tap.

A lot of elderly people of my acquaintance have these little necklace deals with a transmitter and if they fall and can't get up, they hit a button and it alerts a neighbor or it dials the phone and calls a security service. Well, what a terrible thing to have fallen and not even know that you've fallen. You say, I wonder why I can't move around.

I wonder why I can't seem to have the old enthusiasm and the old joy. I'm doing the same things. I'm attending the same.

I know the same things. I believe the same things. I'm participating in the same activities.

What happened to my joie de vivre in the spiritual sense? What happened to my power? What happened to my strength? Why is it I seem so susceptible to sin these days? Why is it that I don't seem to really have the... if we even stop to think. A lot of times we just blow and go and we say, well it must all be fine. You can't be a slave to your emotions.

I'll just ignore my emotions and strive manfully onward. Dark passions subdued. And we just go forward.

Well, what's the problem? We've got to stop. This is why meditation is so important. One of the things in the teaching tradition, the ICE movement, the doctrinal crowd, whatever you want to call it, one of our besetting weaknesses is we get all caught up in knowing what's right and knowing what's true and taking notes on it and writing it down and remembering it and engaging in the works that are consistent therewith and we don't stop.

We don't take the time for meditation. I would submit to you that we would have a healthier life if we had one part teaching and five parts meditation. I.e., for every hour you spend in Bible study, there ought to be five hours of meditation.

Listen to a class on Sunday, come to church, listen to a tape, whatever, and then spend the next five days, take your notes out for five consecutive days and look at them. Don't just reread them and say, well, got that done. There's my work.

Think about it. We have to ask ourselves the question, so what? Boy, it's fascinating to get in those letters to the seven churches, that Ephesus, boy, the tree at Artemis, the tree of life, what an interesting coincidence there and what an illumination that sheds on it. Well, so what? What about me? What about now? What about what I'm going to do this Monday morning, this Tuesday afternoon? If the things that we learn from the Word of God do not change us, if we are not, how many times have we revisited this passage? Transformed by the renewing of your mind.

You are not renewed by listening to me. Did you know that? You are not renewed by reading your Bible. That does not renew your mind.

It gives you the potential for renewal, but you are not renewed in listening to me or any other

teacher of the Word of God. You are not renewed when you review your notes. You are not renewed when you call to mind your memory verses.

It's what you do with that content. It's like saying, well, how much horsepower do I have as I fill up my gas tank? None. You've got to turn the ignition.

You've got to press the pedal. You've got to shift gears. You've got to move down the road with that fuel.

The Word of God is fuel. It is potential. Remember when you study physics and things, you have potential energy, stored energy.

You compress a spring, that's stored energy. But you don't say, my, what a powerful spring, until it pulls on something or pushes on something. Just click your pen a few times.

There's a spring in there. Well, nothing is changing when the spring is at rest, even though it's compressed. It's as it moves that it does its work.

And we have got to think about the Word of God. That's why Jesus says, remember from where you have fallen. That is an imperative to meditate.

Because to remember from where you have fallen, you've got to think about where you were, think about where you are now, note the difference, and try to figure out what happened. Remember from where you have fallen. He says, do the first works.

Do the works you did at first. He doesn't say that their works have changed. He commends all of their works, their labor, their perseverance.

They've done the same thing. They haven't changed. They haven't fallen away in the work sense.

They've fallen away in the thinking sense. They've stopped the why of what they do. And the transforming power of the Word of God is not active.

It's not progressive. We ought to be different people from week to week, and month to month, and year to year. We ought to be more patient.

We ought to be more considerate. We ought to find our relationships with our fellow believers growing in depth. We ought to find our flexibility and our enjoyment of fellowship and of interaction growing because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by God the Holy Spirit.

And if it's not, the only way it's going to change, you can cram on the Word of God all you want. It isn't going to change by learning more doctrine, quote, unquote. It's going to change by spending time in prayer, in meditation, in thinking about the content.

Better a thimble full of the Word of God, better a morsel in the corner of the rooftop where you've

got time to think about it and digest it and have it do its work within than to have a library full of doctrinal notebooks and have all knowledge, like Paul says over in Corinthians, you remember that great 1 Corinthians 13? What's he talking about there? Though I have all knowledge, though I have faith so as to move mountains. If I don't have love, it is nothing. I am nothing.

I accomplish nothing. Look at the applications of nothingness in 1 Corinthians 13. I am nothing.

I accomplish nothing. I say nothing. I am totally ineffective if love is not back of it.

You can see a great contrast between what Paul says to the Thessalonians and what Jesus says to the Ephesians. They are both notable for what they do. They are both notable for what they know.

But the difference between the Ephesian church in John's day and the Thessalonian church in Paul's day is the effective presence of love. And where does that love come from? We've said so many times you can't just decide to have love, but it is time spent in meditation, in communion with the God of love. We speak to Him in prayer.

He speaks to us through His Word. Not when I tell it to you, not when you write it down in your notebook, but when you revisit it later and think about it in the presence of God. That's His half of the conversation.

How does it apply? Ask yourself the question, so what? I spent 80 minutes listening to the teaching of the Word of God Friday. I spent 80 minutes in the teaching of the Word of God. Or if I run off the tape, more than that, 90 minutes, 95 minutes.

So what? What is different in my thinking as a result of that time? Did I just punch the ticket? Did I just check the box? Have I just done another in my list of to-dos? Or is the living and powerful Word of God, is that sword? Think about a sword. You can have the sharpest blade in the world. We saw this Lord of the Rings movie deal here.

You can say what you want to say about Tolkien. I've resisted him for a long time. I've had people ever since I was in high school trying to tell me about the Fellowship of the Ring and the Hobbit and all that and the fuzzy feet and the whole thing with the ring and all.

But any of those stories that you want to talk about from ancient times, Arthur and the sword and the stone and all of this, you have weapons that have a sharp edge and Excalibur has got this sharp edge. Well, Excalibur does nothing. A sword does nothing when it is static.

You cannot cut a thing. Get these Ginsu knives off the TV. You can't do a thing with a sharp knife.

You can have the sharpest set of knives in the world, but if they're sitting in their little holder, if they're laying in the drawer, they do nothing. When is it that a knife or a sword does its work? It's when it moves. When you take that potential and put it into action.

The Word of God does nothing unless it moves. And you can sharpen the sword all you want in Bible class, but unless the Holy Spirit wheels that sword and moves it, it is not going to divide asunder the soul and the spirit and the joints and the marrow. It is not going to expose the thoughts and intents of the heart unless it moves.

And it doesn't move when you're listening. It moves when you meditate. It moves when you spend time in prayer.

Prayer is the exercise of meditation on the Word of God. How dare we come to God without thinking about what we know and what we've learned and what His plan and purpose is. How can you pray in Jesus' name if you don't have a clue of what represents Jesus' name, Jesus' reputation, Jesus' agenda, the work of His Father? How dare we go and pray in Jesus' name without cycling the Word of God through our soul.

That's the movement. That's the activity. That's what cleanses us.

That's what washes us with the water of the Word. How do you get things washed? The Word of God is also compared to water, living water. We're going to be talking about the river of life this morning, which is moving water.

What do you have in the middle of your washing machine? You put in all the dirty clothes, put in some soap, and then what do you do? You just let them sit there? It agitates. The water has to move. People for thousands of years have put their dirty clothes in the water.

Living water, moving water cleanses away the dirt. You squeeze things. You wring things.

You get the water to move through it to eliminate the impurities. There has to be movement. Getting the water in your cup at Bible class is not the movement of the water that cleanses and renews and restores.

A thirsty man doesn't get a pitcher of ice-cold water set in front of him, does he? You've got to drink the water. The water has to move through you to refresh and to restore and to renew and revitalize. So I cannot say enough that when you think about the Ephesian letter, and Jesus says, these things say, he who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands, even the Lord Jesus is moving through the churches.

He doesn't say he stands in the midst. He moves in the midst. He walks.

I know your works, i.e., your labor, this has the idea of the grind that it is, the work that it takes, and your perseverance. You cannot bear those who are evil. You're a wonderful doctrinal church.

You've weeded out the errors. Heaven be praised. You actually figured it out and got it right.

You have tested those who say they are apostles and are not. You've heard teaching that doesn't

reflect the truth of the Word of God and you purged it. You've found them to be liars.

You've persevered. You have patience. He reiterates those same nouns in verbal form there.

You've labored for my name's sake and you've not become weary. That's great. Nevertheless, I have this against you.

You have lost the love that needs to be the motivation for all of these things. Your work of faith is great, but your labor needs to be of love, like it was in Thessalonica. What is the fix? What is the cure? Remember.

Engage in an operation of thinking. Spend some time in meditation. Remember from where you have fallen.

Change your mind. Your mind can't change unless it's moving. Your mind can't change unless it's dwelling and immersing itself in the Word of God.

And then do the first works. Your works may be the same in substance, the same in content, but they will be the first works again when they spring from and are motivated by and energized by love. Otherwise, I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place unless you change your mind.

It's not their works that need changing. It's not their doctrine that needs changing. It's their motivation.

It's their mind. This you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. And this was a perversion.

This was a persecution. This was a leading astray by false leadership, and we'll see more about it in a future letter. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

To him who overcomes, I will give. And this is a subset. This is the Caleb and Joshua category in the church.

If you can hear and heed this warning, most of us as believers will hear and will not heed this warning. The Spirit brings us this admonition as believers. Whom the Lord loves, He chastens.

All of us as believers get this message, but we don't always listen. To him who overcomes, I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. We have three fascinating subjects.

We've already started on the tree of life. We're going to talk about the paradise of God, and we're going to talk about the river of life that sustains and makes possible the growth of this tree of life when we come back from our break. Let's pause here at this point.