

## 02-09-08a Revelation

Let's begin our worship this Sunday morning by taking a few moments at the outset, as is our custom, to focus our thoughts and undivide our attention so that we can take advantage of what God has provided to us in His Word and through His Spirit. We have a lot of worship traditions available in the United States. There are many different kinds of emphasis that take place in a Sunday morning service.

And I appreciate very much the time that we spend together looking at God's Word because there are many wonderful things and there's nothing intrinsically wrong with them. You can have great music, you can have wonderful choirs, you can have talented people do a lot of things in a worship service. But the food that sustains our soul comes from God's Word.

And we have a rare privilege in that we can gather, we can look at God's Word, we can receive the direct ministry of God the Holy Spirit to our souls to transform our minds, to encourage and strengthen and guide us, to give us the wherewithal in our souls to evaluate each circumstance, each situation, each relationship, each opportunity, and to take a step down the narrow road that leads through the straight gate to life. And you cannot overestimate the value of the sincere milk of the Word, as Paul says. And we want to avail ourselves of the opportunity and to not let a failure on our part to sprinkle our hearts and cleanse our conscience and be fully susceptible to the ministry of God the Holy Spirit who is always there, who is ever with us and ever ready to convict or to guide or encourage.

His primary name that Jesus gave him is the Parakletos in Greek, which means the one who is called alongside. And you think of someone, it reminds me of a paramedic or a comforter and an encourager. He's not only our guide through the scriptures, but he is there to comfort, strengthen and keep us and to aid us through all of the different circumstances of our existence.

And so we take this opportunity at the beginning to ensure that we recognize his presence, that we seek his ministry and we are able to understand and reflect on the Word of God to the fullest extent. So let's take a moment here and go to the Lord in prayer. Father, it is a wonderful and comforting thought to know that our success and our progress as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ does not depend on our human ability or our human strength.

You are our strength. You are our redeemer. And you created us.

You have known us since our bones were knit together in the womb. You remember that we are dust. You know our frailties.

You know intimately every part of our situation. We have a fallen nature. We live in a fallen world.

We are beset with what Satan has promulgated and put forward. And so through the world, the flesh and the devil, there are many ways in which we can stumble and fall. And our strength is

completely inadequate.

But you have, in your mercy and your compassion and your grace and the expression of your love toward us, you have more than compensated for all of those deficiencies and debilities through the provision of your Word and the presence of your Spirit. We thank you for that. We thank you for our Lord Jesus Christ through whom this great benefit has come to us.

We have been rescued from a lost and hopeless condition. We have been positionally set on high with Him. And we have been left here in this world to experientially grow and come to that place that we already occupy through positional truth.

And so we ask your blessing on us this morning as we try to avail ourselves of your provision and your grace, as we seek to come to a better understanding of your Word, as we look for that strengthening and quickening power that comes through the Word and the Spirit in such a way that we can live and fulfill your purpose for our lives. We thank you for the nation in which we live. We pray for those that have the rule over us.

Our governmental leaders face very vexing questions and trying problems. We pray especially for President Bush that you will guide him in his very difficult and challenging role in leading our nation and in overcoming the pettiness and the personal agendas that so many in our government seem to have. We pray that you will comfort and encourage and strengthen him in his unique role as a believer occupying the highest office in the land.

We pray that you will be with his family and be with those who support him and who recognize the opportunity we have as a nation under God to lead in the free world in preserving and protecting those freedoms. We pray for those who are not with us this morning. We pray for all those who study along with us through recordings.

We ask that in every circumstance and in every issue that faces a believer who looks to you for guidance and strength that you will provide in a special way and that we will all grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We pray these things in his name. Amen.

For our scripture reading this morning as we continue our studies in Revelation chapter 2 and 3 turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 10. We have completed our studies of the first three letters. The letter to Ephesus, the letter to Smyrna, and the letter to Pergamos or Pergamum depending if you want to go Greek or Latin.

In two of those three letters we have specifically seen the issues of liberty and license versus legalism, perhaps even in all three. But we've seen the Nicolaitan problem mentioned in the first and third letters and we have seen in our most recent study at Pergamos the veering to port or to starboard if you want to look at it in naval terms that can lead into either an excessive dependence upon human strength and human standards or going too far in the direction of freedom and liberty and losing sight of fidelity to God and his word. These have been

characterized and symbolized for us in either the doctrine of Balaam where he put a stumbling block before Israel through actually the perversion of his prophecy by the Moabites and Midianites who saw the Achilles heel, who saw the place where Israel could be turned and the leverage that could be used to pry them out of faithfulness toward God and in so doing robbed them of their strength.

It's like shaving Samson's head. And it is the one place where even strong believers can be caused to stumble and we're going to see that this morning as we move forward into the letter to the church at Thyatira. Paul talks about these very issues, eating things sacrificed to idols and disloyalty, pornography or pornoia in 1 Corinthians chapter 10.

We've looked at a portion of this but we're going to use the chapter as our scripture reading this morning because it really sets the stage for this problem that is not unique to any one of the seven churches. It plagues most of them. 1 Corinthians chapter 10 verse 1 Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them and that rock was Christ.

And let me just pause here and ask a background question. Who lives in Corinth? Who's getting this letter? Is this strictly a Jewish synagogue or a church of nothing but Jewish believers? It's not, is it? In Corinth, which is a major Greek city, you have a large proportion of Gentile believers. Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles, right? And there are Jewish converts to Christianity there, but they are largely Greeks.

Some of them might have been Greek proselytes to Judaism who have now recognized Christ as their Savior. But the reason this is important is, what does he say here? All our fathers were under the cloud. You would think, well, this would only refer to Jews.

But he says, all our fathers, and he's speaking to a mixed group, which is the larger proportion of whom are Greeks. So how can a Greek claim the Old Testament Exodus generation as their fathers? The reason is that this is not physical descendancy. This is spiritual in the same way that in Romans chapter 4 and other places in Scripture, Paul talks about Abraham as the spiritual father of all of those who seek to walk by faith.

In the same way, it's another case of the two-edged sword, because all our fathers, you know, the biblical view of a father is, Jesus told the Pharisees, you are of your father, the devil. They said, oh, Abraham is our father. He says, if Abraham was your father, you would be like him.

The father is who you're like. And so when the Pharisees are reprobate and ignore the word of God that they know, and they are believers, but they walk according to the desires of their own heart, they more closely resemble Satan than they do God, or any man of faith who is in their physical heritage, their physical lineage. And so Jesus says, you are of your father, the devil.

Well, this is, I think, Paul is not an uneducated man, and he's not a simple man. He's complex, he's very intelligent, and I think this is a tongue-in-cheek. You remember how he begins this letter to the Corinthians.

He says, I hear that there are wars and divisions among you, and in part, I believe it. And there's some irony and some sarcasm and some tongue-in-cheek when Paul uses all of the tools at his disposal to try to rebuke, correct, and instruct believers at Corinth to get back on the road that goes through the straight gate. So here, when he says, moreover, brethren, brethren means believers, fellow people of faith, ostensibly, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud.

Well, who are the people who were under the cloud? How many of them went into the land, and how many of them dropped in the wilderness? And if you look carefully, Paul is saying, if you're not careful, just like your fathers came out from under the cloud, this is who you remind me of. You're a chip off the old block here, spiritually. Because again, most of them are Greeks.

They've seen the redeeming blood of the Lamb. They have, in effect, sprinkled it on their doorpost and come out of bondage. But, if they continue in the pattern of their fathers, they're going to drop in the wilderness.

So there's quite a lot more going on here than meets the eye, as is usually the case with the Apostle Paul, and indeed with the Holy Spirit and the entire Word of God. All our fathers were under the cloud. Think about those fathers.

Only two of them made it into the land. All passed through the sea. All were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

Now, you don't typically see the passage through the parted waters of the Red Sea mentioned as a baptism. Why does Paul choose to call that baptism? He is talking to them where they are. They have been baptized in that first generation of the Church, when there was not a completed canon of Scripture.

In the same way that you had sign gifts and sign miracles that took place under the ministry of the Apostles, you also had sign ritual. And water baptism in the first generation of the Church was kind of like the wordless book. It was a Bible of New Testament truth.

And when they took someone down to the river and dunked them under the water and brought them back up, it was a tremendously effective teaching tool. You have died to your old way of life. You have died to the former things.

You have died with Christ. The death He died, He died to sin. When you come back up out of the water, what a great sermon topic to talk about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the power of it, the

purpose of it.

And you have been raised to new life in Christ. The life He lives, He lives to God. You should do the same.

Cast off the former. You have been reborn. So, here is Israel dying to the old way of life, casting off the filth and the contamination of slavery in Egypt, coming through the sea.

Even though they passed across on dry ground, they did not all get dunked, they did not swim for it, but it is a picture of leaving behind the old and coming on the other side with praise to God and all of the subsequent events. All ate the same spiritual food. All drank the same spiritual drink.

Now, where do we see a spiritual food and a spiritual drink in the Exodus account? Well, there is no mention of spiritual food and spiritual drink in the first chapters of Exodus, is there? Paul is connecting the Corinthian believers' spiritual experience and spiritual progress to the Old Testament examples. The old King James said, and samples. And he is drawing as close a connection as he can.

He says, look, you are just like the Israelites and your spiritual food was pictured in their physical food of manna. The water that came forth from the rock is your spiritual drink. They drank of that spiritual rock that followed them and that rock was Christ.

I could do a couple of lessons just on these first few verses. But, and this is the point, with most of them, God was not well pleased for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now, these things became our examples to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.

What was it that they lusted after? There were a variety of things. They wanted the leeks and garlies, the tasty spices and food stuffs of Egypt. They wanted water when it was scarce.

They did not want to be deprived. They did not want to have scarcity. They did not like the feeling of uncertainty that came as they watched the water supplies and the food supplies grow low.

They did not like the testing of their faith. God never let, there is no record of anyone dying of thirst or anyone dying of hunger in all the 40 years of wandering. You do not find a single example of it.

And yet it was the constant worry of the people. They grumbled and complained, they rebelled, they were ready to lynch Moses and go back to Egypt over it. And yet there is no record of a single individual ever dying of hunger or of thirst in 40 years of living off the land in the wilderness.

Even as they were under discipline, God never failed to provide. And yet it was their number one worry. It caused more dissension and more strife and more failure in Israel, worrying over

something that never failed.

With most of them God was not well pleased. These became our examples that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. Do not become idolaters as were some of them.

As it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. When they did get the provision, what is it that they ate and drank? They ate the spiritual food. They drank the spiritual drink, right? They sat down and ate.

They took advantage of what God had provided in terms of logistics, in terms of sustenance. And Paul has already said we want to look at these in spiritual terms. So what does this say? It is possible for us to sit down to eat and to drink.

We can be immersing ourselves in the Word of God. We can be feeding our souls. And we can rise up and become promiscuous with the things of the world.

We can go after our own desires. There is no guarantee that because you pursue Bible study, whether in this class or in any other, that does not guarantee that you are going to live in a way that pleases God. These people all ate the same spiritual food and they drank the spiritual drink.

And they did not succeed, did they? Now there has been a large emphasis in the background from which many of us come on the teaching of the Word of God and on attending Bible class. And yet we have seen demonstrated historically that there can still be great weakness of soul for people who never missed a Bible class and who filled up notebook after notebook. It is not the eating and the drinking that constitutes the living and the growing.

But that is an oft repeated mistake. The people sat down to eat and drink. They enjoyed the food and they enjoyed the drink.

And it came from God. But when they rose up, they did not operate in that strength. They went after the lust of their heart.

Nor, and of course the idea here, rose up to play has the idea of going astray. This is diversion. This is entertainment.

This is another way of saying they were lusting after bad things. Do not become idolaters as were some of them. And Paul tells us that covetousness is idolatry.

The desire for things in an inordinate and unhealthy way. And it can be the simplest thing. You can desire attention.

You can desire recognition. You can desire someone else's devotion. You can desire someone's approval.

You can desire anything that fills a gap in your soul in an unhealthy way. It can be in the category

of idolatry. It is not a matter of getting a little image and bowing down to it.

We do not have that problem today. Our problem is spiritual idolatry. Putting something in the place of God.

Rather than looking to God for strength, we look somewhere else. Rather than looking to God for approval, we look to men. And that was the whole Nicolaitan problem.

Nor let us commit pornosia, pornia, as some of them did. And in one day, 23,000 to 24,000 fell. Now, we don't typically, in believing circles, although it does happen, but in our circumstance, knowing you all as I do, we don't have a problem of going off and being promiscuous or running outside the bounds of our responsibilities before God in the sexual immorality area.

But pornosia is first and foremost disloyalty. You can have mental disloyalty. You can have spiritual disloyalty.

You can abandon almost anything in an unhealthy way. And it falls under this category. The primary problem, when we went over to Numbers 24 and 25 and looked at the Balaam problem, the Balaam stumbling block for Israel was being joined to Baal Peor.

It doesn't explicitly talk about, oh, and they fornicated and they did dance and they did cavort and they did do all the things that you hear Cecil B. DeMille talking about in the Ten Commandments. He really gets into that whole partying mode at the base of Mount Sinai. He adds about 15 verses of non-Scripture to the whole description.

And he's got all of this wanton dancing going on. That was not the problem, although I'm sure it occurred. But people get shocked by the sexual side of it, and it was the disloyalty to God, the golden calf, was the problem.

And being joined to Baal Peor, the Lord of Peor, the God at the mountaintop there with a little G, that was the problem. God frowns on immorality, but what made Him angry and what caused Him to drop 12,000 from every tribe in Israel was disloyalty after they had already pledged their fealty to God. And we do that.

We substitute something else for what God provides for us. We look elsewhere for our strength. We look elsewhere for our approval.

We look elsewhere for our guiding principles of life. Nor, verse 9, let us tempt Christ as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents. Now we don't see Christ personally mentioned in the Exodus account, do we? What happened with the serpents? You'll remember the story back in Numbers chapter 21, verses 6 through 9, where because of their griping and complaining, God sent serpents among them.

And they were bitten, and many of them died. And then in order to stop the plague of serpents,

God told Moses to create a bronze serpent, and that serpent was lifted up on a pole. And anyone who would look at the bronze serpent was healed, and the plague and the poison and the problem of the serpent was stopped.

Verse 10, nor complain as some of them also complained. Now if you think you've managed to dodge all of the other problems here, there are none of us that are not guilty of complaining as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. You can look for the example of this back in Numbers chapter 14.

For example, verse 37. You can see this throughout Israel's history, where God would destroy because of people who decided that God's way just wasn't working for them. Verse 11.

Now all these things happened to them as examples. We were told this up in verse 6, and we're told it again in verse 11. All these things happened to them as examples, and they were written down and recorded for our warning, for our admonition, for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

You just can't get any more emphasis than that. What is the conclusion from all of this? Verse 12. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed.

Even if you think that none of this applies to you, if I think none of it applies to me, he says, you better check again. The heart is deceitful above all things, desperately wicked. Who can understand it? If we do not stop and spend time in meditation on God's word, if we don't analyze and say, yes, I don't have a little silver or gold image up on my mantelpiece, but is there a place where I might be committing idolatry? Is there a place where I might be compromising and substituting something for what God provides through His word and through His spirit? Am I looking for approval from somebody other than the Lord? We have to stop and analyze because it will slip past us.

We have blind spots. It's sort of like, I don't think anybody is really inherently and natively good at accepting criticism. If someone comes up and says, I just want to let you know, I mean, how hard is it to even communicate to someone? There are so many complications.

If you tell someone that you think there's a deficiency, it just goofs up the works. It's a hard thing for us to speak the truth to one another. And if someone tells us the truth and it's a critical, it's a criticism, it's a pointing out of where we have a problem, we just have an instinctive self-defense mode.

It's like the fight or flight thing crops up. We don't like to hear it. It's difficult.

Trust me, I know. It's a hard thing. We don't like correction.

It goes against our grain. We like to think that we're right. We like to think that we're doing

everything, that we've got justification, that there are reasons if there's a perceived failure.

Well, you just don't understand. Let me tell you all the reasons. And so it's easy for us to think that we stand.

It harmonizes with the very fiber of our being to self-justify and self-rationalize and to explain away and to minimize any perceived problems. Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. If we don't learn to be corrected, it's one of the hardest things in the world.

Some of us, it's harder than others. But we have to learn to take heed. We have to learn to look at things that we would like to think are all squared away and we don't really want to analyze them too closely because we've got to sneak an idea that maybe it's not all it should be, but we just don't want to look.

So much easier to keep the surface of the water smooth and ignore the turbulence underneath. Take heed lest he fall. And the motivation to go ahead and do this is do you really want to fall? Do you really want to fool yourself? Everybody in Israel looked at each other.

You know how when you get a group together and it seems acceptable because everybody else is kind of thinking the same thing. We're all sort of, well, yeah, sure. I don't think that's right either.

And you know, I've had that same. And when you get in a group, the group ethic and the group ethos and the group standard can give us a false sense of security and a false sense of rightness because, well, how can this be wrong? Everybody I know feels this way. Everybody I know acts this way.

Everybody I know thinks this way. Everybody I know, why do you think there are churches this morning in Dallas with hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people all getting together, all having the same worship experience and all leaving with no spiritual strength? Now, I'm not saying everybody in Dallas is leaving with no spiritual strength, but I will tell you there's a lot of churches where there's not a thimble full of the Word of God getting through to souls. And you just can't operate on snacks.

And many, many believers are getting a little snack, their once a week spiritual snack, at most. Some of them are actually getting total junk food. They're going in and getting a Twinkie.

It looks big, it's real sweet, but there's no substance and there's no nourishment. And I don't want to sound arrogant or like we've got the corner on spirituality, but you have to perceive and you have to discern. We're commanded to do so, and you all know as well as I do that you can perceive and discern that there's an awful lot of Twinkiedom going on, and a lot of Twinkie distribution in church this very morning.

And hundreds and hundreds of people are lining up and getting their little Dolly Madison snack and going home and trying to live their life before the Lord with no nourishment, with no strength.

And pastors are to blame for putting out sweet nothings, and people are to blame for not demanding better of their pastor. And there's a lot of people that are perfectly content, and if you did give them a meal, they would reject it and spew it out of their mouth.

It's like somebody that has starved for so long, their stomach has shrunk, and when you try to give them a meal, they vomit it back up. They can't hold it. They can't sustain it.

And that's a choice. It's a choice that pastors make. It's a choice that congregations make.

Well, therefore, let him who thinks he stands. And it's easy for us to look around and say, well, we're not like that big group over there. We're not like that little group over there.

We've got the hotline to God here. You can see that everything is dependent upon finding the center. You've got a pit on the left and a pit on the right.

The girls have a little video game that they play in here, and they go in and look for each other and have little firefights with laser pistols and things. And they call it a maze. It's actually a map.

It's like Quake or Doom, if anybody knows about those. But they go through an environment, and there's a walkway, and there's lava on the left, and there's lava on the right. And you're running around, but you've got to be careful to walk on that little narrow pathway because if you veer a little to the left or to the right, your little character dies, and you have to start over.

And our life is like that, and we cannot veer off into error and ecumenicalism and syncretism and let's all get together and love one another. Aren't we all believers? Nor can we get all exclusive and say, well, we're the only ones who have the truth. Everybody else is screwed up, and because I'm in this particular group, I'm all squared away.

We have to assume that we don't really stand, and we have to constantly be looking. We have to constantly be checking, examine ourselves and see if we're in the faith. Otherwise, we are going to fall.

If you don't take heed, you will fall. If you ever get to the point where you're not taking heed, count on it. You will fall.

You can never stop watching where you put your feet. Never. No temptation has overtaken you, except such as is common to man.

We talked about this a week or two ago. We sometimes like to think that, like the old Negro spiritual, nobody knows the trouble I've seen. And sometimes we think, well, we've just got a set of circumstances like no one has ever experienced.

No testing, no temptation has befallen you, but such as is common to man. This is perazmos. It's from perazzo.

This is not dokimazo, testing for the purpose of approval, refining and making something better and better. This is perazzo. This puts pressure on you and shows what you're made of.

If you squeeze a lemon, you get lemonade. If you squeeze a grapefruit, you get grapefruit juice. If you squeeze a peach, you get peach juice.

If you squeeze something that's bitter, you're going to get bitterness. If you squeeze something that's sweet, you're going to get sweetness. God allows pressure in our lives.

And there's lots of other analogies I could use on that, but I won't. But pressure reveals what's on the inside. You push hard enough, and what's on the inside is going to be revealed.

And God allows testing. And it's not always for the purpose of approval. Sometimes that testing is to reveal that the presence of Jesus Christ put pressure on the religious establishment in Israel and revealed its true nature, revealed what was on the inside of those individuals.

No testing. And just think of that as pressure that's going to reveal what's on the inside. No testing has befallen you but what is common to man.

But God is faithful. He will not allow you to be squeezed beyond what you are able to bear. But with that pressure, with that testing, He will also make the way of escape so that you may be able to bear it.

He doesn't say so that you may be able to get out of it, so that you may be able to be relieved of it. He says so that you can bear it. And this way of escape, we think of escape as getting completely away from something.

But this is a means of being preserved through. We are more often preserved through something than we are preserved out of it. Look at the next verse.

Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men. You judge for yourselves what I say.

Now what's he talking about here? Idolatry is a pretty simple thing if you just say get the little metal image out of your house. He says you people have the word of God in your soul. You know what I'm saying.

And he goes on to talk about communion in Christ. But that will do for our scripture reading this morning because this is the issue in the letters that we're studying in Revelation chapter 2. So may God bless the reading and the hearing of His word. Let's turn over to Revelation 2 now where we're going to resume our study.

We've seen the church at Ephesus. We've seen that they have weeded out false teaching. They have persevered and had patience.

They have labored for the name of Christ, but they lost sight of why they were doing what they were doing. They lost their first love. To have a change of mind and to overcome is to have the right to the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God.

What a wonderful blessing. The church at Smyrna, they had persecutions. There are people there who are persecuting them, trying to throw them into prison.

They are going to pay them for ten days. God says, look, this is going to be of a specified duration. You've got to be faithful even to the point of death.

Be faithful as long as you live. If you are, you will have your inheritance guaranteed. You will not be hurt by the second death.

We saw the church at Pergamos and the two-edged sword and the Scylla and Charybdis, the two extremes into which any believer can veer, either over exploiting freedom and grace and prosperity or going into legalism and taking human energy and human standards to bless and validate one another. If we avoid that, we have the hidden manna awaiting us. If we avoid partaking of the luscious, alluring things of this world, we will have things beyond comprehension in the next.

It's hidden manna. It's unlike anything anyone has ever seen. And we have the white stone, the symbol of approval from God, vindication.

You are not guilty. And your name is on it. No one can take it away from you.

No one can give it to someone else. It is a permanent possession. And it implies intimacy with God.

God gave you this name. In a lot of circles, people have a nickname or a special name, a pet name, sometimes couples or within families. There will be a nickname that's only used within the family.

It's a reminder of intimacy and knowledge and approval. And that's what's written on this white stone. We see implied here things that we can't even begin to comprehend in terms of relationship with the God of the universe and the God of creation.

Now in verse 18, we pick up to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, These things says, The son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass, I know your works, your love, your service, your faith, and your patience. And as for your works, the last are more than the first. Nevertheless, I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit pornography, translated here sexual immorality, and eat things sacrificed to idols.

Well, this looks a little bit familiar, doesn't it? Same two things we saw up above in the Doctrine of

Balaam. And I gave her time to change her mind, metanoeo, to change her mind of her pornousi, and she did not change her mind. Indeed, I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will cast into great tribulation, unless they change their mind about their deeds.

I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am he who searches the minds and hearts. Now, if this is strictly a matter of sexual immorality, why is he talking about minds and hearts? It's because pornousi takes place in the soul. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden, but hold fast what you have till I come. And he who overcomes and keeps my works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations. He shall rule them with a rod of iron.

They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels, as I also have received from my Father, and I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Well, what an interesting set of pronouncements.

This is the longest and most complex of all of the letters. And you'll notice it's right at the center. There are three preceded it, there are three that follow it.

And this is in many ways one of the most interesting and complex of the letters. So we're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll take a look at each of these phrases in detail.

But what do we conclude out of our Scripture reading and our review of these first three? We cannot rest on our laurels. We can't assume that because we're associated with a group or because we have a particular habit or practice in Bible study that we're good to go. Constant vigilance is necessary.

We have to take heed lest we fall. It's not a matter of you might fall. If you don't take heed, you will fall.

There's no if clause in there. Take heed or you will fall. So how do we do that? Well, Christianity is a relationship with God.

We have to avail ourselves of the personal presence of God in our lives. God the Holy Spirit is there. There's no one more anxious than God for us to succeed.

If we go to Him and ask, if we go to Him and seek, if we go up to the door and knock and knock and knock, Lord, show me my hidden sins. If we can find those hidden sins, we're going to find the hidden manna. It's just that simple.

If we seek knowledge of the Word of God like hidden treasure, we're going to find that hidden

knowledge of God. It's all a matter of desire. How bad do you want it? Are you going to settle for a sweet substitute, something that's tasty but not nourishing, or are you going to do the hard work and the humbling work of finding? We have that scripture, cleanse me from hidden faults.

Cleanse me from my secret sins. They've got to be outed. They've got to be brought to the surface.

That sharp sword of the Word of God divides asunder and reveals the thoughts and intents of the heart. It takes humility. Pride is the problem of the human soul, and humility from the power of God is the answer.

We have to cultivate that. We have to seek it. We have to do the hard work of examination and purging in our souls.

Then we are in a place to seize and lay hold of these tremendous, incalculably valuable things from God. We will fulfill our calling in that way. Let's pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we'll see what's going on in Thyatira.