

02-11-20a Revelation

Let's begin our study of the Word of God this evening by taking a few moments at the outset to clear our minds, to prepare our hearts, to recognize the grace that God has given us through the presence of His Spirit and the power of His Word, and express our gratitude toward Him and ask His blessing on us as we fellowship together. Shall we pray? Father, it is such a blessing and a wonderful provision that You have made for us to give us time and opportunity and preserved pages of Scripture to nourish and strengthen our souls through study and through meditation and through seeking to have a better understanding of our place in Your plan. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will give us insight and that we will be able to see the applicability of what we find in Your Word this evening.

We pray that as a result we will be more closely conformed to the image of the Savior and to Your plan and purpose for us in this life. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, we find ourselves drawing very near the conclusion of our study of the letters the Lord Jesus Christ gave to the churches in Asia Minor found in Revelation 2 and 3. In particular, as we look at the concluding section of the last letter, the church in Laodicea, Jesus says, As I have stood at the door and I am knocking, if any man will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me. And we see in this a picture of fellowship in this life as well as nearness and intimacy with Christ in the next. And it is as though by hearing that voice and opening the door, now our voice will be heard and the door will be opened unto us in the kingdom.

There is so much that is directly related to our decisions and our priorities and our faithfulness and obedience in this life that is going to be magnified and reflected a hundredfold in the next. Jesus told the disciples, anyone who has given up family, houses and lands will receive it back a hundredfold in the kingdom. And we see that in the concluding portion of this letter where Jesus says, he who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Actually, just before that, to him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with me on my throne. He says, in this life, if you hear and open, the Lord Jesus will come in and sup. He will recline at the table.

There will be intimate fellowship. And to the one who overcomes in the kingdom, we will have intimate fellowship with Christ being seated with him on his throne. And then it concludes, he who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

And this seems to be one of the greatest of the rewards to the commentators and the ones you go and consult in looking at the conclusion of each of these seven letters where he says, well, I will grant to them to walk with me in white or to partake of the hidden manna or to have the right to the tree of life or to have a white stone and a new name, not be hurt by the second death and so on. They said to rule with Christ on his throne, what could possibly top that? In reality, each of

these overcomer promises is of great value. But what I would like to do now is, having essentially covered each of these seven letters, to summarize and draw conclusions from the content of Revelation 2 and 3. We find, first of all, and I looked this up and I wrote it down to be sure that since I didn't do it anywhere along, I will finally here at the last give you the historical view of these letters.

I have made reference to the fact that there is a view that says these churches represent different phases of church history. And it is possible to view church history in this light. I don't think it is the primary way of understanding these letters, but I wanted to give you sort of the official view at least once.

And this is it. If you recall, the first letter was to the church at Ephesus. Jesus introduced himself there as the one who has the seven stars and who walks among the seven lampstands.

And this is thought in the historic or chronological interpretation to represent the early phase of the church. This is from the time of Pentecost through the apostolic ministry all the way to basically 100 A.D. until the death of the apostle John. And the idea here is that the distinguishing characteristic of Ephesus that they have lost their first love and have sort of fallen from the first works represents the gradual, even as the church proliferated and expanded, it seemed to lose touch with its doctrinal core and with the apostolic vision that had been transmitted from Christ through them to these early churches.

And so Ephesus basically spans from 35 A.D. to 100 A.D. and those first generations of the church already with incipient Gnosticism, legalism taking hold and so forth. And even in the first generations of the church you have the growth of a hierarchy, a clergy structure within the church that is thought to be represented in this reference to the Nicolaitans, the people conquerors. The second church, the church at Smyrna, of course is the persecuted church.

You remember their name is the Greek word for myrrh and its association with death and burial rites and the problems they had with the Jews who said they were Jews but were not and were a synagogue of Satan. He tells them they are going to be cast into prison for tribulation, ten days and so on. This is thought to represent church history from the death of the apostles to Constantine.

There was great persecution, which is a fact, from say 100 A.D. to about 300 A.D. so this span of time would be roughly 200 years. There was an end, at least a formal end, to persecution of Christians in 313 A.D. with the Edict of Milan which was issued by Constantine. Actually, Constantine's father was fairly well disposed toward Christians and thought a lot of them and appreciated some of his Christian generals in his army and so on, but Constantine the son took this to an even greater level and decided that he would make Christianity the state religion and he formally decreed an end to all persecution of Christians and if any of them had lost land, a lot of times people would just look at their neighbor and say, I really want his farm, I'll accuse him of

being a Christian and then I can confiscate his land and his house and all of his goods.

This was quite a widespread abuse and so Constantine put an end to it with this edict in 313 A.D. and decreed that if anyone had been persecuted in this way, that they should have their land and their possessions restored to them without having to take the possessor to court and if the one who was the new owner wanted to dispute it, that's why they could go take it up and the state would actually recompense the new owner after they gave back the land that had been wrongly taken. So Constantine sought to right a lot of these wrongs and his heart was kind of in the right place in wanting to promote Christianity and so this is the end of the persecution phase, the end of the Smyrna phase if you will, around 300 A.D., technically 313 A.D. So then the third phase, which is represented in this view by the church at Pergamos, from the Edict of Milan where Constantine embraced Christianity, for the next 200 years or so, you have the formal promotion of Christianity but it actually gets greatly amalgamated and intermingled with heathenism and heathen practices and this is where you start having the modification of pagan rituals and holidays and things and kind of amalgamating them into Christianity. This is the roots of what you find with Easter being mingled with May Day and spring rites of fertility and this sort of thing.

You have the eggs and the rabbits and the Easter star references which is all kind of amalgamated with the resurrection. You have the winter solstice celebrations intermingled with the birth of Christ and so on. So this stretches for about 200 years, roughly 300 to 500 A.D. This is thought to correspond to Pergamos and of course the church at Pergamos was the compromising church.

You have not denied my faith but you have allowed the doctrine of Balaam to come in. The doctrine of Balaam is where the women came in and subverted the children of Israel and drew them away from God and caused them to eat things sacrificed to idols. You can see why this chronological view has its adherence because you can make a connection.

Of course in every one of these generations there have been unheralded and unspoken and unwritten the faithful congregations, the faithful believers, who have been quietly pursuing the faith and the godly remnant, the 7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal and so on. But in the formal history of the church you can sort of see these parallels. Well then beginning in 500 and going for about the next 1,000 years you have the section of history that is ascribed to Thyatira.

The Thyatiran letter sits in the center of these seven. It is the fourth, sits in the middle. It is perhaps the longest of these letters.

You remember Jesus introduces himself as the one with eyes of flaming fire and feet of burnished brass. He talks about your works, love, service, faith, and patience and the last works being greater than the first. But you've allowed that woman Jezebel to teach and seduce my servants, to aggravate the sexual immorality and so on.

So what people have done, and this is why I think it kind of starts breaking down, they say well this is basically the Catholic church sitting as a queen over the world. And of course from roughly 500 to 1500 you have the predominance of the hierarchical church, the bishop-driven, pope-driven church. And this view would ascribe service, faith, patience, works and love and so on, greater works toward the latter than there were at the first, to this church, but then saying but you've kind of turned into Jezebel and you've perverted and corrupted the thing.

Well to me that's a bit of a stretch, but this is the view. So 500 to 1500 you have about a thousand year view of the church corrupted, reigning as an opulent queen of perversity there, and she's going to be cast into the sickbed and so on. Well you can guess what the next one is going to reference and this would be the church at Sardis.

And the Sardis church has no real banning, what am I, it's like a brain cell just quit firing there, condemnation or criticism, criticism is what I was trying to think of. He says your works are not perfect before God, remember how you received and heard, hold fast and repent, if you're not watchful I'll come upon you as a thief, but you have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments. So this is the church of the Reformation from 1500 to 1700 roughly, another 200 year period, is thought to be represented by the church at Sardis.

And the few names that have not defiled their garments, these are your Luthers and your Calvins and your Melancthons and your great heroes of the Reformation. Taking nothing away from those men, this is the view. Cloth and white garments, name not blotted out and so on.

Well, it's pretty easy to see how the rest of this is going to shake out, because with the church at Philadelphia, this would begin in 1700 and run again for about 200 years, from 1700 to 1900. And this is the church of the age of missionary expansion. And this is the view that when Jesus says I've placed before you an open door, that this is the open door that Paul spoke of, the open door of evangelism.

This is an open door of opportunity to accomplish the primary function of the church, which is evangelism in this view. So you have the synagogue of Satan coming and worshiping at your feet. They're put to rest.

You have the Catholicism waning in the background and the Protestant evangelical church, if you will, to the fore. Persevere, I will keep you from the hour of trial. They have the promise of not being subject to the great tribulation and so on.

It is that view. Well, then you come to the most recent letter we've studied, the church at Laodicea and the letter to them. And this is the lukewarm era, the church of the last days.

The commonly held view is that there will be a great apostasy right before either the second coming or the rapture in the 70th week, whatever your particular eschatology understanding is. But it's generally thought that the lukewarm Laodicean church that is poor, miserable, blind,

wretched, naked, that this is the apostate church just prior to the return of the Lord. And this will be the last days.

Now, there is kind of a nice symmetry to this if you look at those periods because you have a roughly 70 to 100-year period. Let's say you have a 100-year period in the apostolic church from 30 to 130, let's say. And then you have this 200-year period of persecution.

Then you have the 200-year period of amalgamation with heathenism. Then you have a 1,000-year period. So you have 100 and then you have 200, 200.

Then you have this 1,000-year big thing that is corresponding to Thyatira. Then you have 200 for the Reformation, 200 for missionary expansion, and then the last one would again be about a 100-year type of period, which brings us nicely up to the present day with nothing left but the return of the Lord if it's a symmetry. So I commend that to your attention as an interesting but not necessarily edifying view of the letters to the seven churches.

I don't know what I could bring away from that except that I don't want to be a pope and I don't want to be a heathen amalgamator or something back in 400 A.D. But now I've covered it. I finally managed to present it to you in its entirety. There are other interesting features that we see when we step back and look at these letters as a set.

And I am indebted to Wesley for what I'm about to say, quoted in the Adam Clark Commentary, which I hold here in my hand, in its 1834 leather-bound Royal Quarto Edition, Royal Octavo Stereotype Edition. And Adam Clark, writing back in the early 1800s and commenting on this, quotes Wesley. And I would like to read this to you because I think it has great merit.

In talking about the summary and this final statement that says, He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He says, Mr. Wesley has a very judicious note on the conclusion of this chapter and particularly on this last verse, He that hath an ear, etc. This counsel stands in the three former letters before the promise, in the four latter after it.

What he's talking about is, if you go back and look at our first three letters, to Ephesus, to Smyrna, you'll notice that he gives his introduction and his assessment and then he says, He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him that overcomes, I will grant. So, He that hath an ear comes before Hanikom in the first three letters.

Then, once you get to Thyatira in the last four letters, it's afterward. He says to him that overcomes, and here's the promise, He that hath an ear, let him hear. Well, why is that? And I looked at that and puzzled over it and scratched my head and I couldn't really find anything that convinced me that it was a valid observation, so I didn't really point it out, but Wesley has this to say.

Clearly, this divides the seven into two parts, the first containing three, the last four letters. The

titles given our Lord in the three former letters peculiarly respect His power after His resurrection and ascension, particularly over His church. And how did Jesus introduce Himself in those first three? The church at Ephesus, He says, I am the one who stands among the... I have the seven stars, I stand among the lampstands.

I am the one having the sharp sword. I am the... to Smyrna, He says, I am the first and last. I am the one who was dead and is alive.

And all of these are sort of time references. Having the seven stars, walking among the lampstands is more of a present reference. The first and last, the one who is raised from the dead, talking about the... we looked at that as the least in the kingdom versus the greatest in the kingdom, being the attitude we should have.

If any man would excel, then let him become a servant, let him take up his cross and so forth. So these first three introductions of the Lord Jesus Christ seem to be much more tied to the present and the ongoing progress of believers in their lives. The last four seem to have more of an eternal aspect.

How does He introduce Himself to the church at Thyatira? I've got too many books in my hands. Somebody read me the introduction that Jesus gives to the church at Thyatira. Right, very good.

So you have Christ in His relation to the Father in more of an eternal view, judgment mode with the eyes and the feet. This is the resurrected Christ that John sees in chapter 1. And this is the day of the Lord Christ and all of His glory and splendor in His judging evaluation. And this is Wesley's point that the first three letters where you have the promise separated from the letter by the admonition to listen if you have an ear, that there seems to be a distinction there.

And I think that's a helpful observation. When you look at the remaining churches, you look at the church in Sardis, He who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. But this is more of a heavenly aspect.

He's up there, the seven spirits are before the throne of God. And this is more of a heavenly view rather than walking among the lampstands which would be more of an earthly view. The one with the sharp sword, that of course is the word of God that is applicable as we go on and live.

The church at Philadelphia, He who is holy and true, who has the key of David opening and no one shuts, shutting and no one opens. There is a door that will be opened in heaven at the beginning of chapter 4 through which John ascends to view the remainder of the next 16 chapters from a heavenly perspective. So this is kind of the idea.

And then of course the Laodicean, he says, I am the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. And so you have more of a heavenly aspect rather than an ongoing connection to the church. And what is the point? Well, quoting again from Wesley, he

says, The four latter, His divine glory and unity with the Father and the Holy Spirit are emphasized.

Again, this word being placed before the promises in the three former letters, excludes the false apostles at Ephesus, the false Jews at Smyrna, and the partakers with the heathens at Pergamos from having any share in the promise. So in other words, these first three letters, he is saying you have condemnation of those who are false and they are admonished to hear before the promise is even given. In the four latter being placed after them, it leaves the promises immediately joined with Christ's address to the angel of the church to show that the fulfilling of these is near, whereas the others reach beyond the end of the world.

It should be observed that the overcoming or victory to which alone these peculiar promises are annexed is not the ordinary victory obtained by every believer. And here we have Wesley writing a couple hundred years ago and he is wiser and smarter in my view than a lot of people that are writing in the modern day with the help of all of our archaeology and computers and what not, because he understood just as we concluded when we first looked at this, to him that overcomes, we do not go to 1 John and say this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith, and ascribe the fulfillment of these promises to all believers. Wesley understood it, Clark understood it hundreds of years ago.

He says again, it should be observed that the overcoming or victory to which alone these peculiar promises are annexed is not the ordinary victory obtained by every believer. But a special victory obtained over great and peculiar temptations by those that are strong in faith. God bless the great gray heads of the past who could look at their Bible even with the limitations of their day and see the light of truth, because that is in fact the case.

These are special overcomers, persevering through trial, persevering through testing, and are, as he says here, those that are strong in faith. And then Clark goes on to spend about an entire page quoting a man who had traveled to all of the seven churches back in 1816 and was writing about the current status of Christianity in those cities. He found only four Christians in one, 140 in another, and of course there are many of other religions, Islam and so forth, and he was saying how these mighty churches of Asia Minor had fallen by the year 1800.

But I will leave that to your own perusal if you choose to dig up a copy of Clark. But these are valid observations and I think worthy of note. Turn with me to 2 Peter chapter 1. We saw in this last letter particularly the idea you do not know that you are blind.

This is really the case in each of the seven churches or in the six churches that receive an admonishment or a rebuke or a reproof from the Lord. He says if you have an ear, you need to hear. You need to change your mind and repent.

You are going down a road and you seem to be blind to your status. You seem to be blind to your condition and to its effect on your future. If you don't change your mind and heed this admonition,

you are going to be ashamed.

You are going to suffer loss. If you heed it, if you hear it, if you respond to it and make yourself an overcomer, here are these wonderful parts of hope. Here are these wonderful promises for the future.

Well, Peter had something to say about this blindness. Simon Peter, this is 2 Peter chapter 1 verse 1, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, also by the way writing very near the end of his life, just as Paul writing to Timothy, he said I am already being poured out like a drink offering, just as John writing in the Revelation is very near the end of his life, here is Peter writing perhaps his last epistle. To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

I may be perverse side of my nature, may make me return to that verse here in a minute because that is one that is abused. If you read that in the New American Standard, it says, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, and they like to say, well now see this is efficacious grace, God gives you the faith to be saved. Peter really takes it on the chin from people who want to press predestination to an extreme.

But I will leave it for the moment. Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. I could preach for the rest of the evening on that verse all by itself.

Grace and peace. What is it that people are looking for, especially as believers? We want to avail ourselves of the grace of God. What is it that the world is searching for? It's peace, peace of mind, peace of soul.

Relief from stress, relief from pressure, relief from the dismal consequences of our own failures and our own faulty judgment and our own bad decisions. Everyone seeks peace. We're about to go into the Christmas season here because it's after Halloween and anymore the Christmas season is two months long.

We're driving over here tonight and people have got their Christmas decorations up. There's stuff in the windows. It used to be people would at least wait until Thanksgiving and I thought even then it was too early.

I think December 15th, put up a few decorations, raise the tree on about the 21st, have Christmas, wipe it all out on the 26th and get ready for some really good football. But anyway, grace and peace be multiplied to you. And Peter says, in, that's what you have in the New King James, in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

So much comes to us by means of the knowledge of the Lord. When you read this in Greek, it says, Charis is grace, charis to you. Charisma, our English word, comes from this word group.

Charis is something that's given. It's a gift. Charismata is used over in 1 Corinthians 14 and 12.

These charismatic movement, all of this comes from, the root is charis, it's grace, it's something that's given. Grace to you and Irene. Peace, we talk about an Irenic scene, you know, a pastoral scene, it's Irenic.

The name Irene, all means peace. And then it says, play funfane. This is the passive from play ro-o, which means let it be a fullness of it.

Let it be full and overflowing, multiplied to you is how they translate it here. May it be multiplied, may it be full and overflowing to you. And then it says, en epinose.

En, it means in or by means of. By means of, epinosis. Not just any old knowledge, but surpassing knowledge.

Epi means upon or over. This is the knowledge that comes by experience, practical knowledge, knowledge that has been, and this is what's happened this week for some of us. You think about your experiences and if not this week, then think of some other week.

But you know how sometimes it just seems as though circumstance and the spiritual world has conspired to give you an especially trying set of circumstances. Some periods of time just stand out as higher in stress. I think sometimes when we study certain things in scripture, well the homework assignment comes, the pop quiz comes.

Did you really pay attention? Did you really learn that? You know, I've been talking about hope and talking about reward for the overcomers and persevering even when you're hemmed in and being faithful unto death, looking for that crown, laying up your treasure in heaven, not investing yourself too much in the world. Well then, once you have that information, you get the chance to put it into application. And well, how much are you invested in? And what do circumstances do by way of twisting your soul around? I personally am having one of those weeks, and so when I come to this, it's just like a freshet of spring water, nice cold water, not lukewarm, but cold.

It comes up when it says grace and peace can be multiplied to you by means of the knowledge of God. Not just knowing about God. This is epinosis of God.

This is experiential knowledge of God. You don't just read about Him. We were talking about something that relates to this before, I think with my daughters.

We were talking about the idea that you can read a lot about something. You can understand it from an academic point of view. You can read about war.

You can get Philip Caputo, A Rumor of War. You can get James Webb, Fields of Fire. You can get all different kinds of books and read about war, but there are people who have been in combat, who have been under fire, or who have been in a combat theater where there are actual

people trying to actually take your life away, and a book can't get you there.

The big Tom Hanks movie can blast your senses and show lots of tracer fire on the screen and come close, but it can't get you there. Men that landed on the beaches of Normandy, people who were in Vietnam, people that have been shot at, that's just an experiential knowledge. There just is no substitute for that.

Well, this is experiential knowledge of God, epinosis. Not only did you learn it from the Word and have it confirmed in your heart by the Spirit, but you have lived it. You have put it into application.

You have seen it at work. You know where you speak when you talk about God because you have experienced His grace. You have communicated with Him in prayer, and He has communicated to you through the Word and the Spirit, and you have lived this life.

You've gone down this road. You are like the Hebrews 5.14 believer who is mature and is ready for solid food and has his senses exercised to discern good and evil. This is the same idea in 2 Peter 1. By means of the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

Now, knowledge of God was available to the Old Testament saints, and a foreknowledge, an anticipation of the Messiah and the work of Christ was available in the Old Testament age. But the mystery doctrines that were revealed, especially through the Apostle Paul, and even Peter learned from Paul, as you can document in his letter. But he says, in the knowledge of God and the knowledge of Jesus our Lord.

Experiential knowledge that is, of course, based on the Word of God and the Spirit of God. But it is application experience of that knowledge. They used to say, well, it's not just head knowledge, it's heart knowledge.

What they were trying to get at is, you have leaned on this. You have used it to get through your time of trial, through your day, through your experience. Verse 3, As his divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness.

Now, this puts in perspective your self-help row at the bookstore. Your step programs and your accountability groups and all of these other things that are put in place and say, well, we'll help you send off and get our resource. You know, for a love gift of \$25, we'll send you our resource.

And this little baggie, and it will help you get through your day. God's divine power doesn't say will give us. Because people say, well, see, this is God providing.

God's providing to you through my wonderful baggie ministry here. I'm going to send you this holy oil anointed prayer cloth from Israel and it's going to get you through your day. Or I'm going to send you my 12 tape series on how to have a better whatever.

His divine power has given. This is a perfect tense in the Greek. Not will give, has given to us all

things that pertain to life and godliness.

How? Through the knowledge of Him who called us. This same epinosis that you find in verse 2. This full knowledge, this working knowledge is probably a real good translation of epinosis. If I had to come up with one single definition for epinosis, it's working knowledge.

Through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue. What does it mean to be called by glory and to be called by virtue? We aspire to the image of God. We aspire to the glory of God.

We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. But we know in our hearts that it is a part of our family heritage. The spirit of God calls out within us and says, Abba, Father.

And we know that we can be more than we are. We know that we can be transformed. God the Holy Spirit puts that knowledge in us after salvation.

Just as when we were lost and separated from God, He put the knowledge of sin and righteousness and judgment in us. At the point of our regeneration, He puts a new knowledge in us. We are a new creation.

We are destined for glory. Whom He foreknew, He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. Paul says he talks from glory to glory.

So what are we looking for? Restoration, fulfillment of that glory. We are called by glory and we're called by virtue. By which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises.

Think about these letters. Think about Hanukkah. To him that overcomes, I will give.

I will grant. Exceedingly great. Exceedingly precious promises.

So that through these, you may be partakers of the divine nature. What does these refer to? What is the antecedent of these? Well, what all has been mentioned? His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. That through these, you may be partakers of the divine nature.

All things that pertain to life and godliness. That come to us through the epinosis of Him who called us by glory and virtue, which are also a part of these things that pertain to life and godliness. Through these, you may be partakers of the divine nature.

We are not partakers of the divine nature experientially just because we're saved. We become partakers of the divine nature through these things that pertain to life and godliness. Through these great and precious promises that are a part of our hope.

Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust, it is the desire that we have for something other than glory. The spirit wars against the flesh. What kind of a war is that? It's a war of desires.

What do I want? What did I want when I got up this morning? What did I want when I arrived down at work? What am I after as I navigate through the day? We talked about Jesus as the wonderful counselor, giving us heavenly guidance, giving us divine guidance about what's important. What part of the terrain should we traverse? What should we watch out for? Well, that's the spirit versus the flesh. That's the heavenly divine objectives versus the earthly selfish objectives.

And that's what he's talking about here. We can escape the corruption that is in the world through our fleshly desires. What's the old verse? When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.

And sin, when it is finished, when it is filled up and complete, brings forth death. We think, well, sin is the big issue. I've got to get away from sin.

And we have our besetting sin. Or we have an area where we consistently sin. And we say, well, how can I overcome that sin? I've got to get a grip on that sin.

But the Bible says that it's desire that conceives. When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin. And sin, when it is accomplished, when it's filled up, when it's finished, brings forth death.

Operational death. Loss of fruit. Loss of fruitfulness.

Loss of productivity. Loss of the glory of God. We sin.

We fall short of the glory of God. So what's he saying here? Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Well, that's a perfect tense.

Have we all escaped the corruption of the world through lust? No. How does this fit into the sentence? Through these, you may be partakers of the divine nature having escaped. The having escaped is a part of that may be partakers.

Those who are partakers of the divine nature have already escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. In other words, if you want to fulfill all things that pertain to life and godliness, if you want to achieve the fulfillment of these exceeding great and precious promises, we have to become partakers of the divine nature. And to become a partaker of the divine nature, you have to have already escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

It's an either or. He that sows to the flesh will of the flesh reap corruption. Galatians 6, 7, and 8. He that sows to the spirit will of the spirit reap life everlasting, life divine, life eternal, life that partakes of the divine power, life and godliness, glory and virtue.

Well, all of that is prelude to the section on blindness. We're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to continue with what Peter has to say that is such a parallel and such an illumination on our study of the letters to the seven churches.

