***Labor, Patience, and Intolerance to Evil

RV07-01***

We ask you to open your Bibles now to Revelation 2. We have found that God has given us an outline of this book. We find that outline in Revelation 1:19. There are three major divisions for the book. First is that division which is described under the words, "The things which you have seen." "The things which you have seen" are recorded in chapter one. The second division in Revelation 1:19 is under the words, "The things which are," and these are the things of the church age. We are now beginning to study "The things which are." We find them in chapters 2 in 3 of the book. Finally, the last and major portion of the book deals with, "The things which shall be hereafter," referring, particularly to these things following the church age. "The things which shall be" are recorded in Revelation 4 through 22:5. That is the major portion of the book. It takes us right out through the tribulation, into the millennium, and into eternity itself. During chapters 2 and 3 that we are now going to begin, the church is seen on the earth. After chapter 3, you don't see the church anymore. The church does not come into the picture. If the church is seen anyplace (and there are a couple of places where we think we do see it), it is in connection with its presence in heaven.

Very definitely, the very order and the arrangement of this book indicates that the tribulation period is preceded by the rapture of the church. That viewpoint fits perfectly with the divine outline given to us here in Revelation 1:19.

Seven local churches have been selected. They are in the Roman proconsular province called Asia, and they make a circle. We are going to begin now with the first church of this circuit – the one at Ephesus. These letters deal with situations that actually existed in each of these individual churches. The whole point of chapters 2 and 3 is to teach us about local church business. We have a habit, as Christians, of being interested in every other dispensation instead of our own. The one we should be most interested is the one in which we live, because we have a great deal at stake.

Please remember that each of you is to be rewarded in heaven someday. If you are trying to hide behind the notion that rewards just mean a crown that you're going to take off and throw at Jesus' feet, and then everybody is going to be equal in heaven, you are in for a big surprise. The Word of God makes it very clear that some people are going to find themselves rewarded to the tune of gold, silver, and precious gems. And some people are going to have hay, wood, and stubble which is burned up, and they have exactly zero – nothing. You cannot get around the literal meaning of that Scripture that some Christians are going to be greatly rewarded for their productivity of divine good, where others will suffer a great loss for their productivity of human good.

The reason that we produce so much human good is because we don't understand what local church business is all about. The distortion and the disorientation in local churches is absolutely fantastic. It is amazing what church members can get away with. It is amazing the slovenly kind of thing we see in the pulpits. This is nothing new. Right there in the very first century, we had seven churches that had all the marvelous and good things that God could honor and bless and commend, and all the terrible things that He had to warn them about.

So now we start a very, very valuable segment of this book; that which will help us to relate ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ in the age in which we live, particularly here on the scene of the local church.

**The Angel**

So we begin. Revelation 2:1: "Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write." Here is the recipient of the first letter. The recipient of the first letter is addressed by this Greek word "aggelos." The word "aggelos" means a spirit being which generally we refer to as an angel. "Aggelos" here can either be referring to an elect spirit being, or it can be in reference to the non-elect spirit beings which we call demons.

However, the word "aggelos" basically means "a messenger." Therefore, it can be, and is, used of humans as well. That's very critical that you understand that. Jesus Christ is not writing this letter to, say, "the guardian angel" of the church at Ephesus. That isn't what he's saying here, nor is He referring to Himself. As, you know, in the Old Testament, Jesus Christ was the angel of Jehovah. He was the pre-incarnate Christ, and the term "angel" was applied to Him. Though He was not in the category of what we call those spirit beings (angels), He was, under this title, a messenger of Jehovah, and that's what "angel of Jehovah" meant. Well, obviously He's not writing to Himself. He is definitely saying there is someone in the church at Ephesus that this letter is directed to in terms of leadership. He is leadership because he's a messenger.

So this word in the Scriptures is used for human beings as well as spirit beings. For example, in Matthew 11:10, we have it applied to John the baptizer as a messenger of the Lord: "For this is he of whom it is written. Behold, I send my messenger." And the Greek Bible has this word "aggelos" there. John the baptizer is referred to as a messenger or as an angel of the Lord.

This same point is reiterated in Mark 1:2, and in Luke 7:27. John the baptizer is called the "messenger," or the "angel" of the Lord. We also have it referring to some men that John the baptizer sent on a mission on one occasion. John was somewhat in confusion over whether Jesus was really the One that he was announcing – whether Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth, was the one that he had been announcing that had arrived. So he sent a couple of messengers to them to ask Jesus, "Are you the one?" John wants to know. John wants this verified. Well, we have these men in Luke 7:24 also entitled by this word "angel: "And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John." and so on. The Greek says, "And when the angels of John were departed;" that is, the men who had been sent by John.

Also, Jesus Himself, on one occasion sent agents ahead of Him into Samaria. These were described by this word "aggelos." Luke 9:52: "And sent messengers before His face. They went and entered into a village of the Samaritans to make ready for Him." Again, the word "messengers" here is this Greek word for "angels."

Then in James 2:25, we have it used again in reference to the men that Rahab hid: "In like manner, also, was not Rahab the harlot justified by works when she had received the messengers (the 'aggelos' – the 'angels'), and had sent them out another way. So here again you have the word "aggelos" used in reference to human beings.

**Ephesus**

That is exactly what you have in Revelation 2. As a matter of fact, you have that in several places in Revelation: Revelation 1:20, Revelation 2:1, Revelation 2:8, Revelation 3:1, Revelation 3:7, and Revelation 3:14. All of these verses speak about a messenger or an angel, and that is the person in that particular local church who is recognized leadership. I shouldn't say that particular local church, because here in the city of Ephesus itself, we must expect that there were many local churches. Ephesus was a huge, great metropolitan center. Christianity moved to Jerusalem. That was the center. For a while, it moved up the coast to Antioch. That became the center of Christianity. But finally, it moved over toward Europe, and the center of Christianity became Ephesus, because Ephesus was the princely city of the New Testament world. So for a city that large, Ephesus was one in which the Christian testimony was very strong. One of the great things that is said about Paul's ministry in Ephesus is that the three years he spent teaching in Ephesus resulted in all those in Asia Minor hearing the gospel. Now, that is a statement.

How many places do we have within the touch of, say, our local church ministry that we can say, "Everybody in this area has been contacted with the gospel?" We'd have a hard time saying that about a block in the city, let alone a segment of the city – that all within that area have heard the gospel. Yet the people at Ephesus were able to say that that's what they had done. Obviously, Paul didn't do that by himself. It took a lot of believers who were out there proclaiming the word to such a large segment of the New Testament world. Therefore, we must assume that there were several churches within this city. But there was somebody among all of these churches, among these local pastors (and that's what we're talking about).

This word "aggelos" refers to a local pastor-teacher in one of these churches who was recognized as the leading pastor-teacher of the Ephesian Christians. When you spoke about the church in Ephesus, this man was "Mr. Ephesus" himself. And in each of these other cities, there was likewise that kind of a leader. So in all probability, there were several churches, and they all shared this letter, in time. They couldn't all gather together in one building because they didn't have church buildings, for one thing. They only had houses to meet in. So obviously, this word "angel" has to refer, here in Revelation 2, to a person (a human being) who, in some way, has a communicator authority. That would be, in all likelihood, the pastor-teacher in that city – one in particular.

This letter is then sent to the messenger of the church. Here is one of those great words of the New Testament: the "ekklesia." The "ekklesia" means "the assembly." It is a gathering of "called out ones." The "ekklesia" is not a building. The church is not a building. The church in the New Testament basically means a body of believers who have been called out from the mass of unsaved humanity. There was never any such thing in the New Testament as the word "church" used in reference to a building. The only reference to the church as a building is to the body of Christ as a building.

What this refers to here is the whole structure of local church congregations meeting in these individual house congregations. You have one of those, for example, in Philemon 2. A greeting is sent to this man in whose home one of the congregations meets in that particular place. This refers to all the born again people in the city of Ephesus. They constitute the church, and that church has local expressions. It's in the city of Ephesus. That word looks just like the English, practically. It's "ephesos." "Ephesos," as we have already shown you, is located right on the Aegean Sea. Ephesus is, in all effect, a seacoast town. It used to actually be right on the seacoast, but over the centuries, the river leading to Ephesus began to fill in, so gradually Ephesus found itself farther and farther from the shoreline. So it became somewhat of an inland city for a short distance, but it could, in all effects, could be considered still a seaport city. This is one of the reasons it was such a major metropolitan area of the New Testament world.

Nearby, off the coast of Asia Minor, was the isle of Patmos from which John is writing. The distance from Ephesus to Patmos is about 60 miles. So Ephesus is located on the river Cayster, about 60 miles from Patmos. It was the foremost city of this part of the ancient world. It was the capital of the Roman proconsular province of Asia. It was the religious and commercial center. It bore fantastic influence on both Europe and Asia because of its location.

One of the things that Ephesus was famed for was an open-air theater that would seat 25,000 people, and it had terrific acoustics. One of the things I would like to do someday is to travel back through these lands that Paul ministered in on his missionary tours. One of the things that you can see, if you do travel in Ephesus, is the archeological remains that have been uncovered of this very stadium in Ephesus. This was a huge feat in itself – a great architectural feat, to have been able to build a stadium like that. It was just what we call a bowl. It was an outdoor bowl, and for it to be so constructed, that before the days of public announcement systems, you had terrific acoustics. And the writers of the ancient world record how this stadium had the qualities of sound that we would envy today.

This place comes into a place of interest to our associations with the Christian faith through a man named Demetrius. Demetrius was a leading silversmith in the city of Ephesus. Paul's ministry, which had extended to all the people of Asia Minor so effectively, resulted in a serious threat to the idol-making business of the silversmiths of Ephesus. In Acts 19:23-34, you have the account of Demetrius getting a mob together in order to urge them to object to what Paul and his associates were doing, and to try to bring a reaction against Paul. As you read this account, you will read that what they did was go to a gathering place. The gathering place they went to was this stadium that would hold 25,000 people.

They got in there, and you remember how, for two hours solid, they chanted, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." You thought that was just something we came up with, didn't you? These guys back in Ephesus were doing it in their 25,000-seat, high-acoustical stadium. They were shouting these football slogans in order to champion their fate. Isn't that interesting that we Christians have to resort to the same kind of football stadium techniques to kick the emotions into action in order to get people to love the Lord, and to serve Him, and to be what they should be? Except that they're not, and they don't, and they won't. In Ephesus, this was a favorite technique. The mob took it to heart because this was the city of Diana. This was the place where she was worshiped above all the New Testament ancient world.

Paul was practically killed on that occasion. He was actually rescued from the mob by a town clerk who came along and pointed out to the crowd that what they were doing was against Roman law. You could not get together a mob like that, and carry on. You could not just move into the stadium like that and take it over. You can do that in United States. If you don't like a nuclear power plant, you can just move in and sit on it, and practically get away with it. But you couldn't do this under Roman law. So the town clerk got out and said, "Demetrius, I want you to listen to me a minute. I want to call your attention to the fact that what you're doing is illegal. If this gets back to the authorities, they're going to come down hard, and you know it." Well, they did know it, and the result was that the mob was very quickly dispersed (Acts 19:35-40). They were not ready to take on the Roman government, but they had made their point that Paul was undermining their idol-making trade.

**The Temple of Diana**

What they were striking out against was the fact that one of the seven wonders of the ancient world was located right here in Ephesus. There were seven great human productions that just awed the ancient world, like the building of the pyramids, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, and so on. One of them was the largest temple of the ancient world. This was the temple to Diana. Diana is her Roman name. Her Greek name was Artemus. This temple was 418 feet and one inch long. It was 239 feet and 4-and-a-half inches wide. It had 120 columns which were 56 feet in height, made of Parian marble. Now that is high. Some of them were very intricately and very beautifully hand-carved. The Temple of Diana of the Ephesians in Ephesus was indeed one of the marvels, and one of the wonders, of the ancient world.

Within the temple, at one end, there was a purple curtain. Behind this purple curtain was a lewd statue of Diana herself. Since she was basically the goddess of fertility, she was portrayed as a many-breasted goddess. In one hand she held a club, and in the other hand she held the trident. The image of the goddess of Diana is purported to have been given directly to mankind from Jupiter. That's the meaning of that passage in Act 19:35 where Diana is being lauded as one whose image has been given to them from Jupiter. The rallying cry, of course, was, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians."

Along with the worship of Diana, as with the other practices of the ancient world, were the temple prostitutes (men and women), who were used in the worship of Diana in immoral sex acts. However, the temple, and Diana's temple particular, was a sacred precinct in the eyes of the ancients. For that reason, the temples were the ideal place to serve as banks. So here in the Temple of Diana of the Ephesians was a great vault. This was a great banking facility. People who had valuables that they wanted stored and protected, brought them to the temple, and they were untouchable. Some of the people of the ancient world had very valuable items of art. Some of the items of art that are extremely rare to us now, and extremely important to us from the ancient world, were at one time actually stored in the Temple of Diana of the Ephesians for safekeeping. So this temple, not only because of its magnificent size, and not only because of the popularity of the goddess Diana as the goddess of fertility, but also because of the high security that was associated with this particular temple vault, was a favorite place for people of wealth in that part of Asia Minor to store their valuables.

Acts 19:37 will be more understandable to you as you understand that it was a bank. It was a place of storing valuables in protective custody. One of the things that was observed about the apostle Paul in Acts 19 is that he was not a robber of temples: "For you have brought here these men who are neither robbers of temples, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess." He quieted them by saying, "OK, we all admit that Great is Diana of the Ephesians. Knock off the noise. Knock off the mob action. You have brought these men, but why have you brought them? Have they been robbers of the temple? Had they spoken against your goddess?" That's interesting. The apostle Paul did not badmouth Diana. He was not in favor of the idol worship (the idolatry) to her. He knew full well that any worship of Diana meant the worship of the demon spirit which was behind her.

But the apostle Paul was interested in making a proclamation of one thing – God's divine viewpoint through the teaching of Bible doctrine. That condemns a lot of what we do in the ministry today, because we are involved with many other things – things that are good in themselves, which are not the legitimate province of the minister of God, who is called to do one thing: to proclaim the full counsel of the Word of God. If he's doing that, I can guarantee you that his hands are full. His hands are for learning it, and his hands are for teaching it.

So the city of Ephesus was no mean ancient city. It was also famous for its demonic activity, which you might suspect. The magic arts were widely practiced in Ephesus under demonic powers. Many of these people, when they became born again believers, took their books and their writings and the instruments of their magic, and they simply burned them. That's what's behind Acts 19:19, where we read: "Many of those also who used magical arts, brought their books together and burned them before men, and they counted the price of them, and found it to be 50,000 pieces of silver." So the Word of God grew mightily. As the Word of God grew, the understanding of what people should do grew along with it. It was clear to them that one of the things they should do is get out of the demon worship, and get out of the occult game, and out of everything that was associated with the occult that they once had. So everything went out. They got together. They got rid of their Ouija board; their astrology charts; and, the whole bit.

One of the things that was refreshing about the city of Ephesus was the fact that it had some very great teachers. For example, for three years, we learn in Acts 20, the apostle Paul taught the people of Ephesus with fantastic results. So Acts 19:10 tells us that, "All they in Asia heard the Word of God." We're also told that Aquila and Priscilla and Apollos all had a ministry of teaching in Ephesus. Acts 18:24-28 describe that for us. The books of 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy indicate to us that Timothy was a teacher in Ephesus. For a while, he was undoubtedly the chief pastor who was putting together and developing the work that Paul had established. And John the apostle, in his old age, headquartered himself here in Ephesus. So they also had John as a teacher in his final days. Here, John is actually giving them a letter dictated to him directly by the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Write**

So to the church (to the local congregations) of the city of Ephesus, a great metropolitan center of New Testament Christianity, and of the commercial and religious world, he gives the command to write: "grapho." "Grapho" here is John being told to act as a secretary. This word is connoting that John is listening to what Jesus Christ is saying, and he is copying it down word-for-word. He's writing it down word-for-word. John is simply acting as a secretary who is under the supervision of God the Holy Spirit to preserve him from any mistakes.

Revelation 2 and 3, in effect, is actually a sermon by Jesus Christ. We are actually going to be studying a sermon preached by Jesus Christ to these churches. This is the sort of thing that if He had walked into these churches, He would have said this directly to them. So John is actually copying this letter as he has been directed to do. This is in the aorist tense which means at the point that he began recording the letter. It's active. John took the dictation himself. It's in the indicative mood which indicates that here we have a statement of fact.

This letter expresses something very important to this church at Ephesus. It is God's divine evaluation of their work. I don't know how often we would like to have the Lord Jesus Christ come on the scene and say, "I'm going to write a summary report on your work." It would be interesting for us to conjecture, wouldn't it, if He walked in here to the Berean ministry and said, "I'm going to write an evaluation report on your work?" Then He looks us over, and He begins writing, and the secretary starts taking it down. I wonder what he would write. That's why this book is so very important, because we're learning lessons here which have to deal directly with ourselves. We're having here a report which was given to Christians like ourselves. This is one letter that I think you're going to particularly be able to relate to, because you're going to be able to see how this letter touches upon things that have destroyed some people that you knew. You're going to see how this letter touches upon things that have made other people very effective servants of the Lord.

Ultimately, however, I must remind you that all of these letters, including this one, speak to you and me as individuals. So don't hide behind the skirt of, "This is to my church organization. That was to that church organization." A church organization is nothing except the people who are in it. That is how these letters were written, and this is how we must read them. So you must take this as if Jesus Christ were saying this to you specifically and personally. Here is what He commends, and here is what He condemns.

The author is identified by going back to chapter 1, and you will see at the beginning of these letters that this is how Jesus identifies Himself. To each of these churches, because of the condition that exists in that church, Jesus identifies Himself, in some respect, to the vision that John saw of Him in chapter 1. In this particular case, the identification is taken from where Jesus is seen standing in the midst of seven golden lamp stands. He is One who is like unto the Son of Man, identifying that it is Jesus Christ. And the first part of verse 16 sees Him as standing with seven stars in His right hand. We found that these stars were the pastor-teachers of these churches, and that the lamp stands represented the churches themselves.

"These things" refers to the content of the letter to the church at Ephesus. "These things said He that held." The word "held" is "krateo." "Krateo" connotes "a firm grasp." This refers to the pastor-teacher to whom Jesus Christ is writing in behalf of the church. This pastor-teacher is in the hand of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is therefore protected. He is guided, and he is disciplined by the Lord. This is present tense, which means he is continually in the Lord's hand. It is active. It means that Jesus holds the leaders. The pastor-teacher, therefore, is responsible to the Lord Jesus Christ for his administration of the local church ministry. He is not responsible directly to the sheep. He is responsible to the Lord, and to Him, he ultimately must give an accounting.

In his hand, He has the stars. We've already seen this word "aster," which is a symbol here for the communicator (the messenger, or the pastor-teacher) in charge of the local church. The symbol does not mean that the pastor is a celebrity. Do not look upon the pastor-teacher as a celebrity because Jesus calls him "a star." That is a modern connotation, and is not implied here at all. The one that is referred to here is pictured as a star because a star gives light, and a pastor-teacher who is functioning in the Lord's hand is giving light to people concerning the mind of Christ, the most valuable possession they have. This star is in the right hand of Jesus Christ. It is the place, again, of divine protection during the era of the angelic conflict. And it is the place of authority with Jesus Christ.

So here He is saying, "I, the one who stands, who hold in My hand the pastor of the church at Ephesus, and who is walking." The word "walk" is "peripateo." "Peripateo" means that he is "moving about." Revelation 1:13 identifies Him as the Son of Man, which is the title of Jesus Christ. Peripateo" is in the present tense, which means that continually Jesus is moving among His local churches. He is moving among the lamp stands. It is active, which indicates that Jesus Christ does the observing Himself directly. What he is observing is the "luchnia." The "luchnia" are the lamp stands. The gold represents the glory and the deity of God. The illumination from this lamp stand comes from oil. Oil represents God the Holy Spirit. The illumination which it gives is Bible doctrine.

So Jesus Christ is walking around, and He's looking at local churches, and He's looking at one thing about him. He is not looking at how many people there are. He is not looking at how large the offerings are. He is not looking at how emotional the people and the meetings are. He is not looking at how extensive the program is. He is not looking at the fame of the members or the pastor or anything else. He's looking at one thing. As Jesus walks among local churches, He sees them as a lamp stand, and He's checking out how brightly the light is burning. He takes a look at the light, and He sees it as burning brightly. That means that that church is giving people the knowledge of biblical principles. The Bible calls it "teaching." It uses the word "doctrine." It is giving Bible doctrine to people in usable terms, and it is giving it to people in depth: not in cute stories; not in some souped up emotional way; and not in some glamorous way, but it is giving people the Word of God in usable form. That kind of a lamp stand burns brightly. It matters not whether there are many or few in it. It matters not whether people are positive or negative who come under the sound of that lamp stand. The only thing that is important to Jesus Christ is that the message is being proclaimed, and being proclaimed clearly and understandably.

When Jesus comes up to a lamp and He sees it's smoking; He sees that the wick is all carbonated; and, He sees that the light is very dim, He gives that group a warning, and He tries to bring them out of it, and bring them back to functioning with the Word of God. If they do not respond, then He simply dismisses that church from His ministry. He cuts them out. He'll either close them down, or He'll simply walk away from that lamp stand and let them keep operating. They keep right on playing church, but Jesus Christ is no longer there. He has walked away, and He has dismissed that particular local congregation.

Our land is filled with hundreds of congregations that Jesus Christ never touches, and that Jesus Christ never has anything to do with. They are the people who are going to be in that category of Matthew 7:22-23, who are going to tell Him how they called Him Lord; how they performed miracles in His name; how they have cast out demons in His name; how they performed so many marvelous things; and, how they give Him all the glory, and Jesus Christ is going to say, "Shove off. Depart from me. I never knew you. You cannot come into My heaven. You are not in My family." And they say, "But Jesus, we were the biggest church in town. When our preacher was named, everybody knew him." And Jesus will say, "Depart from me. You had an organization, but the wick had gone out a long time ago."

That's what Jesus Christ is looking for. You and I have a hard time understanding that, but here's one thing we ought to learn. He is going to look to see how brightly the Word of God is burning in our assembly. And to the degree that it is, He's going to bless this work or any other work. Jesus Christ is walking among these lamp stands observing how doctrine is illuminating. The church is called to be His witness. And that's the job that He put upon us in Acts 1:8, and that's the job that we're supposed to be doing. If we don't, we forfeit our right for existence. The ultimate impact upon society is only going to be made as we champion doctrine – not by any number of movements we could get into.

So Jesus Christ relates Himself to the Ephesian church and to the pastors as One who observes their performance in teaching and in learning Bible doctrine. That's point number one. He relates Himself to this church as the person who's observing how the pastor is teaching, and how the people are reacting. Those two things constitute His basis of evaluation.

Verses 2 and 3 give His commendation for this church, because this church had a lot to commend it. He says, "I know." This is the Greek word "oida," and "oida" is the Greek word for "know," not from experience, but from the omniscience. This is something that by omniscience Jesus Christ knows. What does He know? He says, "I know your 'ergon.'" The "ergon" are the deeds and the activities of this group. What individuals do inside their heads, and what they do outside in their activities, Jesus sees it all. And He is observing it. He may be ignored, but He is there watching.

So no matter what other people do, they may ignore you, and they may not appreciate you, but Jesus Christ is very carefully observing your work. He's observing our works as a church, but He is serving your works as an individual. He spells out specifically what he is observing. He says, "I know your works." Then you have this expression, "And your labor and your patience." In the Greek, that is two words, "kai kai," which should be translated, "both and:" "Both your labor and patience."

**Exhaustive Labor**

Here's an interesting thing that Jesus is observing: your labor. The word "labor" is "kopos." The word "kopos" in the Greek means "toil resulting in weariness." This is a labor that causes you to become mentally and physically exhausted: laboring in Christian service. When you toil for Jesus Christ in Christian service, He observes it. The Ephesians were not worried about overdoing their service. Did you ever worry about working too hard for the Lord? Did you ever worry about getting too involved with the local church ministry? Have you ever worried about getting too exhausted? The great thing about the Ephesian Christians, for which the Lord commended them, was that they did not whine about the fact that the work was so demanding upon them that surely this could not be pleasing to the Lord.

I've heard people say that. I've heard people say, "Boy, this is such a rat race. This is so demanding. This is so trying. I am so tired out. This can't be pleasing to the Lord. I don't have time to do this and to do that. This can't be the will of God for me." I want to tell you that the Ephesian church condemns you right off the bat, because that's exactly what can be the will of God for you, which is not to say that you should exhaust yourself in the Lord's service and not do things you should do. He directs you for the things you should do, but the one thing that the Lord admires a Christian for is that he is ready to put his physical capacities to the exhausted stage on the line for Jesus Christ. This word "kopos" is a beautiful Greek word, because that's the only thing that this word means. When he says, "I know your labor," He means "Your exhausting labor."

This characterized the service of the apostle Paul. You have this in 1 Corinthians 15:10. You have this in Galatians 4:11. In 1 Corinthians 15:10 the apostle says, "But by the grace of God, I am what I am. His grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all." And there's that word labor: "I worked to the point of exhaustion more than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was in me."

In Galatians 4:11, the same principle is reiterated: I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." The Galatians were going into legalism: "I just exhausted myself ministering to you people, and I'm getting kind of afraid that I wasted myself on you because of what you're doing." The Ephesians labored with Paul to such a degree, as we've already pointed out, that, "All they in Asia Minor heard the gospel" (Acts 19:10). That was demanding, trying labor. That meant a lot of personal contacting. A few stable believers wore out in the Lord's service. Most Christians just rust out in the Lord's services, as the saying goes. But a few stable believers just wear out, and every one of us is going to face the Ephesian issue. We're going to wear out in the Lord's service, or we're just going to rust out.

The Ephesians paid a toll, mentally and physically, with weariness, in serving Christ, and the result was not turning around and saying, "I'll never get into that job again." How many times has a ministry been so demanding that you said, "Oh, boy, I don't want to do that again? I did that once, and, boy, that was a chore. I mean, I don't want to do that again. I've had my turn. Somebody else can do it." The Ephesian, when he found a job that was physically demanding, was just as ready to do it the second time as he was the first time. Jesus says, "I just love that about you people. I just love it about you, that as I walk around, your candle is burning brightly. And one reason it's doing that is because you are ready to exhaust yourself for the Lord's service, and you're not whining that this certainly cannot be the will of God."

**Patience**

Not only that, but He said there was another thing that He admired them for, and that was their patience. That is their "hupomone." This word literally means "an abiding under." The word means going on in the face of adversity. This does not mean a stoic attitude that grimly hangs in there helplessly. It refers to the heroic kind of driving endurance that knows how to faith rest in triumph. This is not the stoicism of the world, but the faith rests of the believer who knows how to stay in there; hang in there; and, refuse to give up in the face of hardships. What we face in the angelic conflict is very difficult. The angelic warfare has its attrition on us. Those who are not up to it are going to turn and run to the rear areas to find peace. Jesus Christ said, "The thing I admired about you Ephesians is that you just stayed in there. You endured. You refused to give up."

This principle of reiterated several places in Scripture. Galatians 6:9 puts it this way: "And let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we do not faint." That is the very same thought. 2 Thessalonians 3:13: "But you, brethren, be not weary in well-doing. Hebrews 12:3 also presents that same idea: "For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your mind." Think about what Jesus took on Himself, and what He suffered. The Bible says, "Just consider and think through what He actually bore in our behalf, and you won't be quite so ready to give up just because the going gets tough. The great thing about the Ephesian saints was that Jesus said, "I know your works, and I know your production, and I know that it's labor which is to the point of exhaustion. I know that it is enduring that you hang in there, and that you do not give up."

**Intolerance for Evil**

Then He says one thing more, and that is that you cannot bear them that are evil. The word is "dunamai." "Dunamai" means "to be able." And the negative is that strongest negative in the Greek language. You absolutely cannot bear a certain compromise. What can they not do? There's something the Ephesians could not do. They could not "bastazo." "Bastazo" means "to bear" or "to tolerate." They could not tolerate, and what they could not tolerate was a group of people that are described by the word "kakos." This is the word for "evil in character," or "injurious in yourself." This means people who are morally evil, and yet, who may be the opinion makers of society. The Ephesians did not want peace with the world about them. They did not want favors from the world about them, so that they began softening the condemnation of what was evil in the Roman Empire. The Lord Jesus Christ is just downright proud to be associated with a group of Christians who are intolerant of evil in themselves; they are intolerant of evil in their church; they're intolerant of evil in their society; and, they rebuke any compromising preacher who comes along.

How often have you not been willing to turn our backs on television programs or movies which make so much of American opinion, and which present concepts and portray things that are inherently evil? If you're in the tradition of the Ephesian Christians, you won't be able to stomach it. You'll sound off against it. You'll turn it off. You'll switch the channels, and you will not tolerate sitting there while the world pours its filth out at you and presents it with a dignity that is done in our day. That's what the Lord Jesus meant here when He said, "You absolutely, in no way, can bear those who are inherently morally evil people, and consequently, what they produce."

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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