***Endurance in Morality

RV07-02***

Please open your Bibles with me to Revelation 2. We are continuing in the letter to Ephesus. This is segment number two. We have read thus far, "Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus, write; these things said He that held the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lamp stands. I know your works and your labor and patience, and how you can't bear them who are evil."

The letter that we are reading here to the local church members in Ephesus is being dictated by the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the apostle John, who is in exile on the isle of Patmos in the Aegean Sea. The transcription which John is taking down, as a secretary (direct dictation) is being supervised and protected by the act of inspiration on the part of God the Holy Spirit. So what is recorded is perfectly accurate in transmission. Since that time, the Holy Spirit has been protecting the many copies which have been made of this particular letter, and has preserved for us sufficient numbers of manuscripts to enable us to verify that which was, in all practical effects, the original writing, right down to the very original words.

This letter is addressed to the pastor-teacher of the local church in Ephesus, who is the responsible communicator of revealed truth. There may have been many churches in Ephesus, and there probably were, so this would go to all these pastor-teachers – the church in Ephesus (the local church) being viewed as a whole, as one of visible representation of the body of Christ. The author is the Lord Jesus Christ, and He identifies Himself from a vision which He had previously given John, and which was recorded in Revelation 1:12-16. John was given a very distinct picture of Jesus Christ, a very symbolic presentation of the Lord. Now, as Jesus dictates every letter, He identifies Himself to each church by reaching back into Revelation 1:12-16, and bringing out some facet of what was revealed about the person and the work of Christ in that picture in the first chapter.

In this case, the letter to the church in Ephesus, Jesus Christ is presented in the role of the one who is holding authority over the pastor-teachers of the local church. So He presents Himself as the one in whose right hand (the place of authority) reside seven stars representing these seven messengers.

He is also presented in the role of the one who evaluates the performance of a local church in giving divine viewpoint illumination. He therefore represents Himself as the one who is walking among the lamp stands. He is the one who is observing whether the flame is burning brightly; whether it is dimming; whether it is smoking; whether it is about ready to go out; whether the wick is not being properly cared for; or, whether the ministry of God the Holy Spirit is not being permitted to function in that local church, so that the Spirit of God, which represents oil in these lamps, would be able to perform His work at illuminating the Word of God.

So here is the picture to Ephesus. Jesus Christ is the one who controls the speaker (the communicator). Jesus Christ is the one who evaluates the work that is being done in passing judgment concerning its worth in terms of eternity. That's very, very important. That's a terrific thing that the Son of God does for us. Our problem is to be able to understand and get us communication, because it is always tempting to a local church to be doing things that are good things and nice things, and maybe that people want, which have nothing to do with what God wants that particular local church to do.

One of the advantages of not having a lot of money is that you have to wait upon the Lord to open doors by giving you the money that you need for a certain project. One of the ways the Lord can keep you from moving in directions that do not have His stamp of approval upon them, is simply that He restrains the money from coming in.

I can tell you many, many stories of people who are wealthy people. These are people who have all the money in the world, and people who are Christians, and who are interested in serving the Lord, but who squander their funds in doing things that obviously *they* have concluded they should do, and *they* have been motivated for one reason or another to do, but which do not clearly, for someone standing outside of them, have upon them the stamp of approval of the Lord Jesus. In other words, if you have money, you don't have to ask God what to do. All you have to do is take your money; write the check; and, you can do it. And you can give it a dignified reason. You can say you're doing it for the Lord. You can say you're doing it in order to propagate the Word of God, or to help the missionaries, or whatever. But if you don't have the money, you have to say, "Lord, I think that this is what we should be doing. I think this is what You want me to do, but I will have to have the money to enable me to do this. Will You provide it?"

So Jesus, as He walks among local churches, looks at them, and He supplies the money, or He does not. For some local churches, the Jesus has disassociated Himself from them, by and large. They may have plenty of money; they raise it through other means; and, the funds are there. I'm not suggesting that if you have money, that's the sign that God is blessing you – that you have the will of God by the fact that you have money. But it is one of the factors by which He directs and controls and leads us.

Pastors and the churches in this picture are directly responsible to Jesus himself. That's the point here. They are directly responsible to the Lord Himself. He is their head. So we see Him as the one who judges their divine good production.

**They Gave of Themselves**

To this church, there were certain things that the Lord said, "I really like about you" – certain commendations. He knew the nature of their activities in the Lord's work. He pointed out that He knew that the nature of their activities consisted of two basic things, and He like both of them about this church. One was that he knew that their labors resulted in personal weariness. These people in Ephesus fade in emotional and mental and physical exertion to serve the Lord. They exercised their spiritual gifts to the point where they got tired. They exercised their spiritual goes to the point where it was toilsome. This church knew how to push itself to do what should be done. They did not let their spiritual gifts rust. They were active. They were unstinting in their service, and they gave themselves in the way that is extremely commendable, and that God very much favors.

The same sort of thing was commended by the apostle Paul to the believers who were gathering funds to relieve the famine which was taking place at one time in Jerusalem. In 2 Corinthians 8:5, within this passage that deals with Christian giving, the apostle Paul says, "And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave themselves to the Lord and unto us the will of God." Paul observes that, while these people delivered money, they did something more important. First they gave themselves to the Lord. First they presented themselves unstintingly. They had only so much brain power; they had only so much emotions to use; they had only so much physical energy; and, they had only so much time in their lives. But, first of all, they cut a chunk of it out and said, "This is for you, Lord. This is for the exercise of my gift. This is for the projection of divine good for Your glory and my eternal reward." So they gave of themselves first. This is what the Lord is commending concerning the Christians in Ephesus – that they put themselves out in toilsome, wearisome service.

**Endurance in the Face of Adversity**

Another thing the Lord said He knew about their works, and that He liked, was their endurance in Christian service in the face of adversity. In the midst of the angelic warfare, when things got tough, when the going got tough, they didn't just crack up and quit. These people kept at it. They served as until the Lord, so they were not affected by people. They were not affected by the response of people. They put out the Word of God, and they recognized the responsibility of people to go from there with the information: whether they wanted to reject it; or, whether they wanted to act upon it. They were not sidetracked by pointless debates. These people persisted in doing the Lord's work, and they did it under adversity, and they didn't even permit others to draw them off into stupid little theological debates about things that were not that significant in the long run.

There's a lot of being carried away from an enduring persistence in the Lord's work because some idiot comes up and he shouts some challenge of a doctrinal nature, and then we would say we're like a bunch of sucker fish, and we hook ourselves on it, and pretty soon we've got somebody who's controlling our lives – somebody who's pulling this way and that way as they debate their cute little theological subjects with us that they've got a particular hobby on. You want to be careful of that. If you are not, you will not be in the place where the Lord can commend you as He commended these Christians. When He said, "You stayed at it in the face of adversity," that meant that they stayed at it in the face of the subtlety of people to lead them straight.

Jesus knew that these people worked for Him, and He knew that they worked for Him to the point of physical weariness; emotional weariness; and, mental weariness. He knew that they did not give up because the going was tough. They were a persistent, enduring group. He also knew that these people in Ephesus did not tolerate those who are evil in character. They had a sense of the holiness of God, and they had a sense of the righteousness of God, and they stood for it. We shall see that some of these other churches here in Asia Minor had degenerated a long way from where they had a clean-cut stand toward separation from evil.

This is the thing that you and I have to guard against all the time. It is not as uncommon as you think for Christians to find themselves as practitioners of evil. The eventual results are breakdowns in your spiritual life. We're going to see that it was starting here in Ephesus. You will become insensitive toward separation from evil. You'll be willing to tolerate evil. You'll be willing to play with evil. You'll, in time, find yourself enmeshed in evil. And every now and then you get shocked by the evil that you've been involved in. Other people hear about it, and they are shocked by the evil that you've been involved in.

What the Lord is commending this church for here (He said, "I really like this about you.") is that there are some things that are right, and there are some things that are wrong, and for the things that are wrong, you're against them. He's not talking about things that some bluenose preacher came up with that he was wrong: you must not play baseball on Sunday; you must not wash your car on the Christian Sabbath; you must not go swimming if girls are in the lake at the same time; or, all kinds of other inanities that come up as being evil and good and right. He's talking about what the Word of God says is evil. He's talking about the clear-cut moral precepts of the Word of God. That's the thing that He's talking about.

He says, "You take a stand for that." And when you find somebody who is playing footloose and fancy free with evil, you don't join him; you don't smile at him; you don't approve it. You condemn it. The Bible forbids evil conversation. So if somebody comes up and tells you a dirty story, what do you do? You don't want to hurt his feelings, so you say, "That's a good one." You pretend to laugh at it instead of saying, "I'm not the city sewage processing plant. Take it someplace else. I'm not prepared to handle that stuff."

The people at Ephesus did this. Jesus said, "I really like that about you. When evil comes along, you don't just wink at it. You don't just say, 'Well, it's OK.' You don't just pass on the other side. You say, 'It's wrong, and I don't like it, and I'm making my stand against it. I will not be party to it.'" They refused to cooperate with the promoters of evil because they were separated unto Jesus Christ.

They did not approve of people who were opinion makers in society whose minds were evil-oriented. There is a great deal that is upon us in this nation today of ideas that are being dignified and that are being championed as being lines that Americans should accept. I don't even want to go into that here. Some of them are really gross, and some leading exponents who are opinion makers in our country are championing what the Bible says is evil, and which the Word of God condemns. Well, when you run into people like that, you should turn them off. You should not give a hearing to opinion makers – people who are influential in our society whose direction is toward the promotion of evil.

**Morality Tests**

Beginning in the latter part of verse 2, we have a few more things that the Lord adds to this commendation for these Christians in Ephesus. He says, "And you have tried them who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars." Here is the testing of false teachers that the Ephesians were careful to do. This would logically follow. They were not interested in being compatible with evil. Therefore, they would not be compatible with teachers who were leading them in the direction of that which was false.

The world "have tried" is the Greek "perazo." "Perazo" means "to test something to determine whether it's good or bad." So these people were listening to speakers. In the New Testament times, people would come through these cities. They stopped into the local assemblies. They would present themselves as teachers of the Word. So the Ephesians would listen to these people, and they would listen in order to "perazo" them; that is, to test whether what they said was good or evil. This is in the aorist tense, which means at the point that they would listen to these people. These people were claiming to be communicators. It is active voice, which means that the Christians themselves did the testing. In other words, they had a good enough frame of reference of doctrine that they could listen to somebody, and their frame of reference was strong enough that red flags would fly up if they heard somebody speaking who was claiming to be a communicator of the Word of God, and claiming to be a representative of God, and was not.

This is a very valuable quality. You can see why Ephesus was a strong church. If you can listen to speakers and discern that they are God's spokesmen or not, you've accomplished a great deal. "You have tested them who say." The word "say" is the Greek word "lego." The word here means those who declare. It is present tense – those who come and make a constant statement about themselves. It is active. That is, the passing-through teacher makes this claim. He declares something about himself. The Greek has another word which we don't have in English. It actually has the word "themselves." It is the word "heautou." We would translate it this way then: "And you have tested, for good or bad, those who call themselves." And what they call themselves is "apostolos." Immediately, you can see how we got our English word "apostle" from this.

Please remember that the word "apostolos" means "one sent forth." "Apostolos" is used for a person who is authorized to speak for another. It does not always have the technical meaning of the gift of apostle. The gift of apostle is a specialized gift which only a few men had in the New Testament church. The gift of apostle is one of the gifts which was phased out in the New Testament church. We no longer have apostles today. There are some churches, such as a Roman Catholic Church, for example, which claim to have apostles – that all of its cardinals, for example, are apostles. They claim that on the basis of what they call apostolic succession; that is, that the early apostles put their hands upon certain men and conveyed to them the spiritual gift of apostle.

You know enough about spiritual gifts, immediately, to know that that is impossible. That is false. The only person that gives spiritual gifts is God the Holy Spirit. You could come up to me and ask me for the spiritual gift of teaching, and I no more could give it to you than I could jump from here to the moon. Only God the Holy Spirit can give you the gift of apostle (if you were to have it), or the gift of teaching.

**Apostles**

The gift of apostle had a certain purpose – that purpose of producing the New Testament in Scripture. That was one of the main purposes. And getting the New Testament church established is no longer needed, and, therefore, it has been phased out. The apostle had authority over many churches, and these churches that do claim to have apostles (or bishops) who can tell other pastors where to go; where to serve; or, where not to serve, have authority over what churches may do; may not do; who their pastor will be; or, who their pastor will not be, that is in keeping with the New Testament gift of the apostle. The only trouble is they don't have that authority because the gift of apostle no longer exists.

So here we are not talking about those who claim to be apostles in the sense of an official gift such as the twelve apostles. This is in the general meaning of a communicator of divine viewpoint. So to the New Testament, there were many "sent ones" – people who were sent by God as ambassadors to communicate His Word.

The Lord Jesus Christ is presented, of course, as the chief communicator. Hebrews 3:1 refers to Him in those terms of being the chief apostle: "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the holy calling, consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Jesus Christ." That, of course, is what the book of Hebrews tells us – that the final communication of God was through the appearing of His Son in this age of grace.

So the point of being an apostle, as in the case of Jesus Christ, is that you are sent on a mission. Jesus was sent on the mission of salvation. John 4:34 tells us that, as well as John 5:23-24 and John 5:30-36. All of these tell how Jesus was sent as an apostle, and how He was sent as somebody who was on a mission.

When you were sent by somebody as his spokesman, you carried that person's authority. When our government sends somebody to negotiate with a foreign government, that person is our ambassador or our representative. He carries the authority of this nation. If this is a strong nation, then he carries a strong voice. But if he's a representative of a rink-tink, nobody nation, then he carries a very weak voice. So the human ambassadors are respected commensurate with the power of the government which sends them.

And so too with us. As ambassadors of Jesus Christ, we have the highest authority in the universe. Therefore, when we speak, we speak with great authority, provided that we've been sent to speak. When you are sent to speak, as we have been by God, you represent Him, and you speak His ideas. You are not sent to propagate your own points of view.

So one of the things that, of course, is evident about a communicator is that you can analyze what it is he's telling you. If you discover that the communicator is constantly conveying to you a series of his own ideas, without any Biblical frame of reference, then you can suspect that he is not a communicator from God. So you can suspect that what he is communicating has come from himself and his own old sin nature. If he is a communicator for God, then what you'll be getting is what the Word of God has revealed. He will communicate to you the contents and the explanation of Scriptures. So the true apostle, which is sent by God, such as Jesus Christ was, will be a true communicator of the mind of God (John 20:21).

Well, these people in Ephesus looked at these apostles as they came through (these sent ones). These people came and said, "I'm a communicator of the Word. Today, we would say, "I'm a preacher." And they came by to teach the Word and to preach. They tested these people with their frame of reference of doctrine, and the Scriptures say that Jesus commended these people for the fact that they could spot the phonies. Jesus said these people came by; they said they were apostles; you tested them to see whether they were true or not true (good or bad); and, you found that they were not. This is the Greek word "eimi," which is the word "are," with the strongest Greek negative "ou," indicating a negative conclusion. These people tested their speakers by doctrine, and they found them to be false representatives.

Of course, the apostle Paul himself had prepared the Ephesian pastors in a unique way for this very problem. Once more, I remind you that when he gathered with them to say farewell to them (the record of which we have in Acts 20:29-30), he warned them about these false apostles who would be coming their way. Paul said, "For I know this: that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." He's using the analogy that they are pastors and shepherds over the flocks of God's people, and God's people are always threatened by wolves who want to come in. God's people are threatened by these false apostles (these false messengers). You will notice that they will enter in among you. They will enter in among the sheep to try to snare some of the sheep and lead them out of the fold. But notice, even worse, verse 30 says, "And of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them." So the church at Ephesus was well aware of the fact that from within their own congregation, they could expect men whom they knew; whom they had fellowship with; and, whom they had engaged in Christian service with, to come along and to get off on the wrong doctrinal angle someplace along the line, and start championing a false allegiance and a false cause, and trying to rally people to their cause.

Please remember that one of the most incisive things revealed to us in the Word of God is that some people are determined to do evil. These people who are functioning on human viewpoint not only are determined to do that, but they take great delight in seeing others do it also. Once you are offbeat in doctrine, there is one thing that you are obsessed with, and that is to get other people to join you in your misconceptions. You not only want other people to join you, but you are obsessed. That's the word I use. You are obsessed to get people to join you. Paul said that these false teachers, who may at one time have been thorough teachers, but now are on a jag of error, are going to come in like wolves; they're going to sneak in; they're going to smile; they're going to grin; they're going to be sweet potatoes; and, they're going to try to snag the sheep and lead you into error.

The Lord Jesus said, "I look at you people, and I want to tell you, I like the fact that even when somebody arises from your congregation and starts spouting off false doctrine, you are not carried away with it." Here and there, there were a few sheep. There were a few backward sheep. There were a few sheep that have some kind of internal problem of their own that they have not been able to cope with, so they're easily led off. That kind of a sheep always thinks that out there is where it's at. But Jesus was indicating that the people of Ephesus had taken Paul says admonition to heart, and they were aware of the fact that these false teachers would come along. They tested them, and they found out that they were not what they claimed to be.

Incidentally, it was not only the apostle Paul here who had warned them of this. Even John, who is now writing to them, had given them the same kind of admonition. John probably used the city of Ephesus as his headquarter base, so he had much contact with these people. But in the first epistle that he wrote, in 1 John 4:1, he states this very principle for which Jesus is commending these people: "Beloved, don't believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

It is amazing how many Christians are dumb enough that, just because somebody claims he's a reverend; he's a preacher; he's a doctor of theology; or, something else, that they believe him when he speaks. They listen to him. Instead of like the Bereans of old, they do not check the Scriptures. While they may listen willingly, and they should give a hearing, they then checked the Scriptures whether these things be so. That which is so, they receive willingly, and that which is not, they condemn.

That's what the Ephesians did. They gave a hearing. Then when they saw that this was not compatible with the Word of God and with the frame of reference of doctrine which had been built in their souls, they rejected it. They didn't care who it was. They didn't care whether it was somebody they knew by great friendship from the local congregation. They finally had to look at him; call him by name; and, say, "You're wrong, and at this point, we part company." Some Christians resent the fact that they are warned not to associate with believers who have gotten out of step with sound doctrine, or believers who have been negative to teacher, teaching, and technique in a local church. They just cannot understand that they should be separated and on-guard against those people.

Yet here the Lord Jesus comes along and they think that He doesn't know any better. They think that He's not as smart as some of these Christians we have among us. The Lord Jesus says, "I want us to commend you for the fact that when some wolf rose up from your own congregation, you cut off from them. You cut him out of your life; you cut him out of your communication; you cut him out of your contact; and, you weren't foolish enough to stand around debating the Bible in order to help him to learn how to be restored. You preserved your compassion. You didn't let him sink a hook in you, and then wiggle you down the road to the things that interested him, so that you couldn't have time to listen to the things of God that were interested in your behalf."

This is a great letter, and it is a letter that has a lot of present-day, current application. This church was by and large a great church, but it had a subtle hairline crack of a breakdown that was beginning to show up in it. Part of it was beginning to ease up on these very things that Jesus could commend them for.

One of the things that gives away false teachers (I'll clue you in on this.) is that they substitute emotions for sound doctrine. They are the kind who will tell you that they prefer love to being right in doctrine. They prefer a right feeling toward Jesus Christ and toward other Christians to being absolutely right in doctrine. A man recently told me that he had visited a home bible study group. He found when he visited with another friend that the group was led by a man who sat there on the floor as they would sing and discuss the Scripture. And he kept rolling his eyes upward and smiling at the Lord up there, praising the Lord. The thrust of the meeting was emotional outlay. As he listened, he discovered that it was charismatic, and he discovered basic false doctrine (which isn't too hard to spot in charismatics) being spouted. So he went home and he thought through the points of discussion.

The next week, he went back, and he brought these points of discussion up into the group. That's what it is: it's a discussion group. He said it really got hot. Then he said, "Finally, this leader said, 'I have spoken in tongues. I know I've spoken in tongues.'" And our man said, "Did you speak in real languages?" He replied, "Well, of course, there were real languages." Our man said, "How did you know that?" And finally, after going back and forth with that kind of inanity, the leader of the group finally, in indignation, said, "Well, I want to tell you that I'd rather have the right feeling toward the Lord and be a little wrong on doctrine." Our man said, "Wait a minute. Would you say that again? I want to be sure I heard that." And he said, "I'd rather be a little wrong on doctrine and have a right feeling toward the Lord." And our man said, "Now, would you say that again? I just want to be sure that these people heard what you said."

Do you see what he said? How typical of a charismatic. He does not realize that every human emotion you have is determined by the content of doctrine. If your emotion is of the Spirit of God, and is an emotion that is compatible with the thinking and the feelings and the directions of God, it will be because you have sufficient doctrine to guide you to that emotion. If you do not have sufficient doctrine, the only emotion that you will receive is controlled by the old sin nature. There are thousands of Christians who never have understood that – that the emotions that they have are the emotions of the old sin nature. That's all they are, unless they have been overridden by God the Holy Spirit, and God the Holy Spirit produces right emotions. But the Spirit of God cannot give you an emotion of love (He cannot give you the capacity to have genuine love) unless you have the capacity built by doctrine. Unless you have a residue of doctrine in your soul, you cannot have sound emotions.

So this poor joker was standing up here as an "apostolos," a sent one to teach these people as a communicator of the Word of God. He's standing up there and telling these people that it's more important how you feel about a thing than to know sound doctrine. He would rather have his feelings than sound doctrine. He was not realizing what he was telling those people. And, of course, they didn't understand that this man was saying, "I am functioning on my old sin nature, and boy, it feels good. It just feels great when I function on my old sin nature fact. In fact, I like it better than studying the bible. But that old sin nature emotion – I love it." He wouldn't call it old sin nature emotion, because he's not bright enough in Scripture to know that that's what it is.

So you can spot a false teacher by the fact that he is feeling-oriented. He uses these code words of love, and of attitude toward Jesus Christ, and of good feelings toward other people, and so on. False doctrine produces a pseudo love, and the old sin nature controls the emotions of the soul. There is a direct relationship. The more doctrine you have stored in your human spirit, the more genuine your emotions will be, and the more controlled they will be. Don't forget that. The more controlled they will be.

So you screamers and yellers and swearers and cursors and mad-dog types, check your content of doctrine. Check the functioning of doctrine in your human spirit. It's not in the head. It is what has been transferred down to the human spirit by your positive acceptance to it. The doctrine in your head, that you are willing to act upon is what God's Holy Spirit puts in your human spirit, and that's what He can use to guide your soul into emotions, and to guide your mouth to express the right kind of emotions.

It is no wonder that the Lord Jesus could comment about these people that they checked these apostles, and they were able to spot them by their emotions, I have no doubt, as one of the key things. There were certain people that came into the early New Testament church, and you could just find them by the words they used. You could spot them by how they rolled their eyeballs, and the most holy ones could roll each eyeball independently in opposite directions. You knew that they had really been with the Lord when they could do that. But there were some smart Christians in Ephesus who were not taken in by that. The red flags went up, and they smelled a dead fish.

**Discernment**

So what's the result? The result of their investigation, it says, was that they found something. The Greek word is "heurisko." "Heurisko" means here "to discern." It's in the aorist tense. At the point of listening to this teaching of these false teachers, they discerned something. These Christians themselves were capable of doing it. It was a statement of fact. They discerned something about them. They discerned that these people who were claiming to be communicators from God were indeed "pseudes" (liars). Here is where we get our English word "pseudo." They were false. They were potshots who came by, and these people were not taken in. They claimed to be God's spokesmen, but they were pseudos. They were fakes. What were the credentials that they brought? Their ability to emote. And the Ephesian Christians were not taken in.

In the church at Corinth, one of the pseudos that was easy to spot was the women preachers, when they got up and sounded off. I want to remind you of that. No woman was ever permitted to speak in the assemblies of the gathering of the church. These women were practicing the so-called gift of tongues, and they were doing (please remember) exactly the gibberish speaking that charismatics do today. They were doing it in a New Testament church. The women were doing it. Some of the men were doing it. It was common already down at the temple. The heathen priests and priestesses already did that. This was showing up here in the local church. And maybe it even happened here in Ephesus. Who's to say? Maybe some very personable personality starlet type of gal came along and broke out into tongues, or she got up to preach the Word of God. These people didn't have any trouble at all recognizing that that was a false apostle, and that that was a false communicator, because God does not communicate His viewpoint through women in spiritual things. That's not because women are ignorant or stupid or backwards, but just because it's not God's order. Most women are a lot smarter than most men. What these people were doing was following in Satan's tradition. John 8:44 says the devil was a liar from the beginning. What we have here is the liar carrying on his work today.

So the Ephesian church was able to spot the false apostles (the false communicators), and it identified them for what they were. They were frauds. Jesus says, "I love you for it. You call these people what they are. They're liars."

There was another thing in verse 3 that Jesus says I like about you. He says, "And have born." The words "have born" is the Greek word "echo," and it really means "I have." "To have borne" is the same word we had previously: "hupomone." We had it back up here in verse 2 where He says, "I know your patience." That word "patience" is the same word "hupomone." What it means there is your "perseverance." Here He says, "You have perseverance. You have a driving endurance – a constant quality, active of these people. Jesus Christ, again, commends them for the fact that they were laboring. He knew their works; He knew their labor; and, He knew their patience." He then says in verse 3 (he repeats), "And you have patience," which is again a repeat of the same word you had up in verse 2: "bastazo." "Bastazo" means "to endure." In one place, it's a negative: "You cannot bear," He says, "You cannot endure." Up there, He commended them for something they couldn't endure: those who were practitioners of evil.

In verse 3, He says, "You've endured." What do they endure? Well, they endured a lot of ridicule and a lot of hardship. After all, they were a group that was a threat to a major industry in Ephesus: to the silversmiths who were making the little silver images of Diana. This was the headquarter city of the worship of Diana of the Ephesians, as she was called. Here they endured the antagonisms and the contempt of these people whose very livelihood their Christianity was threatening.

Why did they do this? "You have done it for My namesake." The word "for" is "dia," and that here means "on account of." Their motivation for their endurance is given. What is that motivation? "On account of My name: "onoma." We would translate it, "And you have endured on account of My name. In Scripture, name is closely related to the person. It's the same thing as saying "the individual." People were named in the Bible according to characteristics, so they were given a name that matched that characteristic. When their characteristics were changed, their name was sometimes changed. Jacob means "the conniver," or "the deceiver." Yet when he became a man who was oriented to divine viewpoint, with that long nighttime struggle with the pre-incarnate Christ, his name was changed from Jacob (the deceiver) to Israel: the prince of God.

So when the Bible speaks about "name," it is equated with the individual. Here it is the name of Jesus, so, in effect, the word "name" here is equated to the person of Jesus Christ Himself. So to do something in the name of Jesus Christ means to do it because of Him. The name is equated to the person.

You can follow this through in some examples like Matthew 6:9, Acts 2:21, Romans 15:9, and Acts 9:15-16. The Ephesian Christians were devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself – not to a denomination; not to a church; and, not to a cause. So Jesus says, "You're devoted to Me, and I appreciate that."

The next phrase, "have labored" is not in the Greek text, but he did add, "You have born and have patience for My namesake, and have not fainted." The word "fainted" is the Greek word "kopiao." "Kopiao" means to grow weary. It has again that strong negative "ou." "They just definitely," Jesus said, "did not grow weary in their well-doing, and in standing up for the Lord Jesus." That's what he meant by saying, "You stood by My name. You stood by who I am. You stood by what I stood for."

The Lord knew what it was to be deserted. That was not a unique and unusual experience with Him. For example, in John 6:66, after Jesus had done some very tremendous things, and had given some very tremendous instructions, a large crowd was following Him. When they discovered the implications of what He was teaching them, that crowd abandoned Him. Then when He was left alone with His disciples, He turned to the twelve. In John 6:66, we read, "From that time, many of His disciples (that is, of the general public) went back, and they walked no more with Him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, 'Will you also go away?" And Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we believe, and are sure, that you are that Christ, the Son of the living God."

What was Peter saying? Peter was saying, "I'm standing on the name of Jesus." What is the name of Jesus? The name of Jesus is the person of Jesus, the Son of the living God. When Jesus said, "This afternoon, hundreds and hundreds of people were pressing on us and following us. It was the 13 of us (twelve of you and Me) and we were sitting here alone. Are you going to do the same thing that they did? Are you going to desert me? Are you going to abandon My name?" And Peter, speaking up for the group, says, "No, what You represent (what Your name stands for) is what we are committed to." And they did not abandon Him: "You have not fainted; you have not deserted; and, you have not grown weary and left." This is in the perfect tense. Their spiritual stamina had developed in the past, and it continued to the present.

Maintain a status of spiritual combat readiness. Take in the Word of God. "But," Jesus says, "nevertheless, I have something against you, because you have left your first love." He said, "There is something that I am not pleased with you about. It's not bad. It's only a hairline crack. But it is a thing that is going to become very serious if you do not stop it." The thing I want you to notice is that this was a fine congregation. These were strong believers. These were people who had developed a mature spiritual maturity structure in their soul. That is where the trouble was beginning to show up. Something was happening to that spiritual maturity structure. They were being careless about it. They were not paying attention to it. The problem that Jesus is going to bring up to them here is the threat of backsliding – the threat of reversionism. We shall look at that in detail next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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