***Persistent Endurance under Pressure

RV22-02***

We now continue our study of the letter to Thyatira as we have been researching in detail one of the qualities for which the Lord Jesus commended this church – the quality of Christian service. This, of course, is no small commendation since so much of service to God by Christians today is simply worthless human good. It's very successful in the eyes of men, but very unsuccessful in the eyes of God. So it's no small thing when a group of people can be commended in this way for their Christian service, indicating that it has been service which has been fought in the finest tradition of Christian soldiering in the angelic conflict with victories that are indeed victories.

**Inerrancy of the Bible**

Christian service producing divine good results, of course, requires training in the Word of God; that is, the Bible, in order to learn the techniques; the tactics; and, the use of combat gear in spiritual warfare. For this reason, Satan has therefore mounted a major offensive in our day against the Bible itself in terms of being an absolutely accurate record of God's word. We use the word inerrancy to describe this quality about the Bible – that the Bible is without error. In its original manuscripts, it was absolutely without a single iota or a single sliver of error. In copying these manuscripts as they've come down to us over the centuries, the copyists made mistakes from time to time, and these were incorporated in Scripture. But fortunately, so many manuscripts were made, that by comparing manuscript with manuscript, we have been able to reduce the question of uncertainty of what the exact words were to something like maybe a half page of the New Testament Bible. And these are all words that are inconsequential in their effect. They do not affect any major doctrine. They don't change anything because we may not be sure in one way or another of some word or some ending. But the point is that when the originals were written, they were without error. We have in effect today an inerrant Bible.

That happens to be the major theological battle today. The raging issue is, is the Bible a book without error? Is it an absolutely accurate record of God's mind? This battle has arisen because Satan has instigated the battle. For centuries, since the Reformation, and for centuries before the Reformation, there was never any question in anybody's mind that the Bible was inerrant. From the days of the Reformation, certainly all the reformers made it very clear that the Bible was a book without mistakes. Any time the Bible touches on a subject, it does so without error. Satan has sought to undermine this to the degree, of course, that Satan can undermine the absolute authority of the Bible as being the mind of God. To that extent, the Christian soldier will be neutralized in his service in the angelic warfare.

The satanic attack against the inerrancy of the Bible has been very successfully executed. There is not one single major denomination today which has not been infected by this disease – not one. Whenever the biblical doctrine of inerrancy is abandoned, there is always a course of action that inevitably follows. So you have groups, for example, like the Methodist church, which is absolutely a religious organization without meaning and without purpose, and involving itself in things like social action, social programs, and so on, because it has lost all biblical frame of reference and all biblical meaning for existence. How did it begin? It was when one day leaders of the denomination tolerated the view that the Bible is a book with mistakes in it. Therefore it can be judged by human reason to decide what is true and what is not true.

All of this we must view against the background of the fact that Jesus Christ himself made some pronouncements on this subject. I have been amazed to actually hear some of these theologians say that the Bible never teaches the doctrine of inerrancy. Well, I wonder what you think the Lord Jesus Christ meant in John 10:35 when He said, "If he called them gods unto whom the Word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken." We won't get into the line of discussion that the Lord is carrying on here with the unbelieving Jews, but he has made this important statement: "The Scripture cannot be." What does it mean that the Scripture cannot be broken?" Well, if you put something in the Bible that is not true, then the Scripture can be broken. If, for example, the Bible should say the earth is flat, and scientifically, we've discovered that the earth is not flat, but round, then the Scripture has been broken. That's what it means. It means that there is an error in the Bible that is contradicted by reality. The Bible, if it cannot be broken, cannot have error in it. That's a simple statement that Jesus made.

So don't tell me that Jesus Christ was not teaching biblical inerrancy. He did it again in Matthew 5:17-18. Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily, I say unto you to, till heaven and earth shall pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no way pass from the law till all be fulfilled." What this is referring to is the actual system of writing of the Hebrew language. The jot and tittle refer to elements that are used in the writing of Hebrew letters, and Jesus Christ said nothing in the Hebrew Scriptures right down to the very letters, and the words that those letters express, is going to lack fulfillment. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My Word won't. It will all be fulfilled." Now, why? It won't be fulfilled if it's false. The implication of what He said is that every one of these marks on the page recording the mind of God are absolutely accurate, and therefore, they will not pass away.

The Bible itself, of course, claims to be the product of God the Holy Spirit, who cannot make a mistake. People amazingly seem to forget that. 2 Peter 1:21: "For the prophecy; that is, the Word of God – that particular facet of the Word of God, came not at any time by the will of man" (that is, as a mere human production, as those who believe in errancy say). Those who believe that the Bible has mistakes believe that fallible men wrote the Bible, and therefore they included their fallibility (their mistakes) in the Bible. But here the Bible says that the Bible is not the product of mere fallible men: "But holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." These men spoke what the Holy Spirit delivered to them, and they were carried along. The word "moved" there in the Greek language is the word which is used to describe putting wind in the sail of a sailboat and moving it across a lake. They were carried along, in other words, by God the Holy Spirit: "Who cannot carry them into error." The Bible is very clear that it is the product of God Himself.

Certainly 2 Timothy 3:16 must be added to this, which says that, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," and the word "inspiration" means God-breathed. All Scripture is God-breathed. All Scripture is the result of God breathing into the writers what they should write. 2 Peter tells us that the Holy Spirit carried them along so that what God had breathed into them, they recorded accurately on the page. That was the combination. Does God breathe error and falsehood into the writers of Scripture – a God who is veracity and cannot lie? You can see the utter nonsense (the absolute lack of logic) that is involved here in suggesting that a God who is veracity can breathe into men a Bible which is something less than absolute truth.

If you and I were not sure that this Bible is without error in what it tells us, we would have great reservations about putting our lives; our treasures; our families; and, our futures into the lifestyle that the Scriptures outline for us. We would have serious doubts as to what is out there before us that we should so sacrifice this side of our existence. Without an inerrant Bible, we couldn't be sure that the investment is right. Without a cause that we know is a true cause, we would have great reservations about entering the spiritual combat of the angelic warfare.

One man that God has raised up is a man named Dr. Harold Lindsell. All of you have heard about him. He has written two books, and I take the time now to call your attention once more to these two books. One of them you're acquainted with. It's called The Battle for the Bible. The Battle for the Bible was written several years ago. Since then, the reaction has come. Boy, the reaction was a firestorm, because Lindsell laid it out step-by-step. The consequences of that first book are followed up by a second book called The Bible in the Balance by Dr. Lindsell, in which he takes up the refutations of those high and mighty people who call the plays in this country in its religious thinking, and in its religious institutions. They have responded to Lindsell, and Lindsell takes up what they have said. When Lindsell's book came out, the high and mighty of the religious world started squealing like stuck pigs because they had been exposed to the consequences of the false doctrine that they were teaching. These books would be well worth your reading. That is the basic proposition. The more detailed exposition of Scripture: if you would like to pursue that, we have studies on that in the basic series that have taken up specifically the issue of inerrancy. You should be well acquainted with those studies. Get these books and read them. Every Christian should know these books, and know them well because the people who are in influential positions in the religious world, including the evangelical camp, are out to get your belief in the inerrancy of Scripture.

The opponents of inerrancy were outraged by Lindsell's book because it exposed their deceitful beliefs, and it exposed their really incompetent scholarship. These people are what you would call scholars, and it is unbelievable what they display. Consequently, their scholarship (their stupidity) has been challenged by Lindsell. The things they said about this man are really something. These responses that you'll find in this book are so pitiful and so inane, it indeed reveals the abysmal ignorance of the average Christian who sits in the pews. That's really the problem, because if the Christians in the pew were not so ignorant, they would not permit these men to be in positions of authority. I'll guarantee you that nobody could ever be pastor of this congregation (that now constitutes Berean Memorial Church) and get up and suggest that the Bible is a book with error in it. They'd have his neck before the service was through, but that's only because the congregation is informed.

Lindsell's basic premise in this book is that anyone who rejects inerrancy, as taught in the Bible, cannot be classified as an evangelical Christian. That's what infuriated these men. Lindsell says, "If you don't believe what Jesus Christ said about the Scriptures, then you cannot consider yourself an evangelical New Testament Christian. That's true. I don't care how you want to slither around it. If you do not believe what Jesus said about the Bible being a revelation from God without error, then you cannot call yourself a New Testament evangelical Christian. You can call yourself any number of other things, and I can think of several good things to call you myself. But you cannot call yourself an evangelical Christian. That's the long and the short of it. These people don't like that because it separates them, and they come up with this old hack idea that one shouldn't bring up things that are dividing Christians. Boy, I hope the apostle Paul didn't hear that. He told us those things about Peter fooling around back in Antioch with the Judaizers, and then the coppersmith that gave Paul such troubles, and Paul said, "Watch that guy. Boy, he did me dirt." You talk about dividing Christians. Can you believe that?

What did the Lord Jesus Christ Himself say? I came not to make peace, but to divide the mother from her daughter, and the mother-in-law from her daughter, and the father from his son – family members from one another, over what. Over truth. Don't be stupid, folks. Division is at the heart of truth. If you stand for the truth, you will be divided from error. That's what it's all about. No one has come up with any evidence to discredit Lindsell's contentions. You ought to read The Battle for the Bible first, and then The Bible in the Balance second. You'll have the whole picture. There is not an iota of evidence to counter what he has said.

Here's what this is all about. The training of Christian soldiers for effective spiritual combat demands an inerrant Bible. If you don't have that authority, you have no grounds for going into spiritual combat. Failure to believe that the Bible is inerrant results in low combat morale. Without inerrancy, the sword of the Spirit is nonexistent. The sword of the Spirit is a key item of the Christian's combat gear. If the Bible is a book with mistakes, you don't know what kind of a sword you've got. You may have nothing but the handle in your hand with no blade on it when you go into battle. It is nonexistent. Christians who really believe they know what God thinks have a courage and a devotion to duty which others lack. That is self-evident. The people who really believe that the Bible is God's voice to them are people who have a devotion to duty. You don't have to egg them on. You don't have to keep pushing them. They know that they are dealing with eternal realities, and they stay right in there.

When the doctrine of inerrancy is rejected, something has to take its place. That is always emotional domination of the believer's soul which Satan manipulates. One of the things that you will find if you read the second book is that the responses of these men to defending what the attacks of Dr. Lindsell against their desertion of the inerrancy doctrine were on an emotional level. They came back with emotional arguments. They came back showing what was the problem with them in their own soul: that instead of their mentalities governed by the Word of God directing their souls, they were scholars under emotional control.

Why should we insist on intensive teaching of the Bible if the exact details are uncertain to us as to what is really true? Christians generally are very muddled in their thinking about what God thinks. People do not know the Bible, and one of the reasons people do not know the Bible is because preachers themselves do not understand, from the doctrine of inerrancy, that this is the supreme book of information, and this is the supreme thing that people need to know. Whether you need to know how to brush your teeth; how to maintain good physical health; or, whatever else in life you need to know, the one thing you supremely need to know is what's inside the covers of the Bible, and that's what people are not being taught. One of the reasons the pastors themselves are not obsessed with this as a mission is because in the back of their minds, they have this gnawing question as to which part of the Bible is true and which part of it is false. They've got a faulty sword in their hand with which they're trying to do battle. They give Christians faulty weapons with which to do battle. And that's criminal. That is monumentally criminal.

I had a sister during World War II who worked in a munitions plant in Chicago, and she was an inspector on the line, and she was really tough. They were making parts of artillery shells. She said, "Anything that didn't look up to perfection standards within tolerances, I threw out, and I didn't question that decision, because in the back of my mind was always the possibility that this particular shell might come into my brother's hands, and he'd be dependent upon it." She wasn't about to put a defective weapon in my hands or anybody else's. But preachers do it. They have no hesitancy, do they? They put defective swords of the Spirit into peoples' hands because they do not instruct and teach the people of God. Why? Because they question the doctrine of the infallibility and the absolute truthfulness of Scriptures.

The view of the Bible will also therefore affect your eternal rewards because your Christian service is going to be governed by whether the Bible is errant or inerrant. Those who respond to the Bible as an absolutely reliable record of divine viewpoint become maximum producers of divine good service in the angelic conflict, and they merit great reward in heaven. The Christian soldiers who believe in the infallibility of Scripture, and therefore can enter that combat with full confidence and with full battle morale, are the soldiers who also will receive special recognition someday at the "bema" (the Judgment Seat of Christ).

**Persistent Endurance under Pressure**

We come now to another point of commendation in verse 19, and that is summed up in the word "patience." The Greek Bible says, "And patience." The word "and" is the Greek word "kai." It indicates an addition of another commendable quality. The commendable quality which is here commended is the Greek word "hupomone." "Hupomone" means literally "abiding under." It indicates the concept of stability under pressure. This word refers to "perseverance" or "endurance" in the face of a certain kind of trial. That is one thing that we want to observe that is significant. This is trial as the result of circumstances in a person's life, or various things that come into a person's life – material things that may cause trials and pressures. "Hupomone" is a distinct word of a person being under trial and pressures, and yet, moving ahead. It is being under the pressures of circumstances (external things), and yet he does not cave in.

The Greek language is so definitive for us that if God the Holy Spirit were talking about pressures that come from within a person, we have a whole different word. That's the word "makrothumia." "Makrothumia" is a word also for pressures and for persevering under pressures. But this is from something that comes from within a person. So it's very significant. God the Holy Spirit is telling us that one of the things that Jesus Christ was so very proud of the church in Thyatira for was that these people were under external pressures of various kinds, yet they did not collapse. They did not break down. They persisted. They had an enduring quality about them.

If we look in Scripture, of course, you think about someone who would illustrate this concept of endurance. Our minds very readily turn to the great patriarch, Job. James 5:11 refers to the endurance of Job, when James writes, "Behold, we count them happy who endure. You have heard of the patience of Job," and there is our word "hupomone" – the patience of Job: "You have heard of the patience of Job." Well, what kind of patience did Job have? What kind of endurance and what kind of perseverance did Job have? Well, obviously, it was under external circumstances: losing all of his material possessions; losing his children; tragedies external to his body; sores upon his body; and, great personal, physical pain. All of these things were external circumstances: external things that happened to Job.

How did Job persevere? His wife said, "Blaspheme God, and let him kill you. And get out of your misery." Job's reaction was, "The Lord has given. The Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." That statement is a statement that demonstrates a man who has the quality of "hupomone" during perseverance and under external pressures. Job was not about to turn against God. He was not about to be disloyal to God. He was not about to shake his fist in the face of God and say, "Why me?" Instead, he understood that these external things had a reason. Perhaps he didn't understand them all. Obviously he didn't, and his friends certainly didn't, and his wife certainly didn't. But God in time made it clear what the purpose was, and the purpose was very fantastic.

Wouldn't it have been a tragedy had Job broken down under these external circumstances when what was at issue was demonstrating what a godly man and what a man who is oriented to God's divine viewpoint can do when Satan puts him under pressure? And it would have been a great humiliation to the living God to have his man, Job, break. "Hupomone:" You can see why Jesus Christ looked at the Thyatira church and probably thought about Job as an example of this quality in a believer. You can see how very fantastic and outstanding it is that you have Christians who can pursue in God's service under external difficulties. Patience is unruffled temperature while evil pressures are upon you, and you persist in executing the will of God. It's a triumphant fortitude which turns tribulation into glory.

The Bible gives us several examples and expressions of this concept of persistent endurance under pressure in Christian service. 2 Corinthians 6:4 tells us that commendable Christian service is characterized by persevering endurance under adverse circumstances: "But in all things commending ourselves as ministers of God." Then he gives a list of things that commend them as servants of the living God. The first thing he mentioned is this "hupomone:" "in much patience." That's this same word of this persevering endurance under external pressures. Then he goes on and he actually names some of those external pressures in afflictions; necessities; distresses; stripes (that is, beatings); imprisonments; tumults; labors; watchings; fastings; and, so on. Many external pressures were upon them, and yet the quality that commended them as servants of the living God was that they stuck with it. The quality of personal devotion that cannot be swayed heads the lists here.

In Hebrews 12:1-2, we have pointed out to us that various sins will hinder us from running the race of the Christian life of service with persevering endurance: "Wherefore seeing we also are compasses about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us, and let us run with ('hupomone') patients (persistent, persevering endurance) the race that is set before us." You will see that in order to do that kind of Christian service, it is required that we set aside the sins which so easily beset us. Why is it that some Christians are forever in the Lord's service, and then out of the Lord's service? Sin. It is sin that contaminates our character so that we cannot stay in the battle.

Our example in verse 2 is looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross." The word "endured" exemplifies this concept of persevering endurance: "He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." So if we are going to be believers who persevere in our Christian service, one thing that we have to deal with is the evil that comes into our lives.

Another factor that works against persevering endurance in God's service is personal trials. In Romans 12:12, this is pointed out to us. Paul says, "Rejoice in hope, patient (and there is our word "hupomone") in tribulation, continuing diligently in prayer." He tells us to be "patient in tribulation." One of the places that you have to be enduring is when you are under personal trials. When personal problems come into your life, that's when we break down and say, "Oh, I've got too many burdens. I've got too many griefs of my own. I can't continue with the Lord's business. I have troubles of my own. I've got troubles economically; I've got troubles socially; I've got troubles physically; I've got troubles mentally; I've got marriage troubles; I've got troubles with my children; and, I've got all kinds of problems," and all of these are used as justification to dissuade us from keeping on and doing what needs to be done in the Lord's work for which you are responsible. Persevering means persevering in spite of personal trials.

One of the hardest times to stay on the job for the Lord is described for us in Hebrews 12:7: "If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons, for what son is he whom the Father doesn't chasten?" "If you endure." The word "endure" is our word "hupomone." "If you persist without letup when God is chastening you." That is a tough time to practice the quality of "hupomone." I'm sure that one of the things that was true about Christians in Thyatira was that some of them were out of the Lord's will; and some of them were under divine chastening; and, yet they were pursuing the lifestyle of the believer, and getting themselves squared away. When God is chastening you, your reaction will be one of two kinds. You will say, "Lord, what is the trouble?" He will clarify to what the issue is. You will make confession, and you will make correction, and you will be able to persist in your Christian service. Or else, your other option will be when you are under discipline, you'll drop out. One of the two is what happens. What the writer is pointing out to us is that the quality of persistent endurance in God's service requires correction of that which has brought about the discipline.

And, of course, one of the very hard times to stay with your service for the Lord is when you are suffering in a way that you don't deserve it. This is when something is being done to you by other people that they just should not be doing. Things come into your life that you just don't deserve. You don't have it coming. 1 Peter 2:20, therefore says, "For what glory is it if, when you are buffeted for your faults, you shall take it 'hupomone?' But if when you do well and suffer for it, and you take it with persevering endurance, this is acceptable with God." There is the word "hupomone" used twice in that verse. These are circumstances and things. What Peter is saying here is that sometimes you bring grief into your life. You bring distress into your life by something that you have done. So you are suffering for those things, but you still go on in the Lord's service. He says, "Well, that is good." But how about when you don't deserve the trials? How about when somebody is mistreating, you and then you go on in the Lord's service? He says, "Now that is really pleasing to the Lord." It's not as commendable to go on when you've brought the grief upon your own head as it is when you don't deserve it. When these external circumstances that are beyond your control (and which you did not bring upon yourself) come upon you, that is the time when this quality is tested in us – these expressions of persistent Christian service.

What's the incentive for persevering Christian service? There is an incentive for persevering Christian service. If you want to emulate this quality that was true of the Thyatira church, then you have to pinpoint what will produce it in yourself. That is very simply described for us in Philippians 2:13, where we read, "For it is God (specifically God the Holy Spirit) who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Since Christian service of the divine good kind is the product of the Holy Spirit's leading and enablement, it is obvious that He is the basic incentive for persevering service. It is your being open to the leading of the Holy Spirit; your being in a status of spirituality so that He can speak to you and guide you; and, your responding to the directions of service that He gives you. Then He will give you the enablement to persevere in that service. You will then be motivated in the right way, and you will then carry the job through on your own. Nobody will have to come to you and remind you to do it. Nobody will have to come to you and ask you to do it again. Nobody will have to put their hand in your back and push you in the direction that you should be going. For a Christian to be motivated to persevering service for Jesus Christ, he must be filled with the Spirit. He must be controlled because he is yielded through confession of known sin.

The New Testament Christians were filled with the Spirit. For that reason, we turn to a passage such as the one in Acts 4, and we read a tremendous record (a tremendous classical example) of this quality of persevering endurance in the Lord's service. You will notice that it is all attributed to the fact that these people were under the control of God the Holy Spirit. They had a frightening circumstance (a frightening situation) to face. This would be as if a police contingent had come in, and under the authority of some spokesman, had said, "Don't you ever perform another ministry of Berean Memorial Church? Don't ever hold another youth club meeting. Don't ever open another Christian classroom. Don't ever get up and send out another tape. Don't ever proclaim in expository manner what the Bible has to say again. If you do, you will be punished, and all the power of the police department is there to confront you."

These were frightened men. They went to God. They said, "We're fearful, but we must persist. We must obey God rather than men." But they needed the capacity from outside themselves to do it. That capacity came from the filling of God the Holy Spirit. This is the Christian soldier's perseverance.

The spiritual battle is never smooth-sailing, but it's driving ahead in the face of satanic obstacles. Staying in the battle and keeping up the pressure on the enemy is an uncommon Christian virtue, but it is essential to victory. I have to remind people, for example, who want to sign up for summer camp that some of them do not have the quality of "hupomone." They do not have the quality of persevering endurance, and they should keep their names off that list. And if they make the mistake of signing up, they very often demonstrate to everybody in the camp staff that they have failed in this quality, because something comes up, and they can't get it out. They want to go home, and they want to cut out. We've had staff members who come along, and I've even had them where they have been cooks (in a very critical role), and somebody twists their noses wrong, and because their service is not as unto the Lord, and they do not have this quality of persistent endurance, they just said, "I'm going home." I've had them disappear and not even tell me that they're going, and I'm the director. ... I should be told. I know when somebody can't gut it out in summer camp, and the same is true in all of the other ministries around here. You expose yourself sooner or later.

This is no small thing. You can see why Jesus Christ got excited. This is a quality such that you don't just wake up tomorrow morning and say, "I've got it." It's something that has to be developed. The deserters and the AWOL gang in our ministries demonstrate to us that this is what they don't have. So if you don't have it, don't sign up for a ministry.

You can see why the Lord has a great esteem for the believer who has persevering endurance in his service. Military history is replete with examples of soldiers who have fought battles that seemed hopeless and impossible to win. But they've hung in there. They had this quality of persevering endurance, and in the face of all odds, they were victorious against infinitely superior sources. That's exactly what Jesus Christ is calling upon us as good soldiers of Jesus Christ to do. We don't kid ourselves for one minute that the forces of Satan are not a formidable enemy to face, and that they have capacities that we cannot match in any way in our human realm. But we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. Romans 8:37 gives us that promise.

So how great is the tragedy indeed of retreating Christians? How great is the tragedy of Christians who don't even know that there is a battle that they're to be engaged in? So this is the quality of persevering endurance.

Then there was one last quality here in Revelation 2:19 for which Jesus Christ commended these believers. Again, we have the word "and" which is the Greek word "kai," indicating another quality being introduced. It says, "And your works." The word "your" is the personal pronoun "su" that indicates that this is the particular Thyatira congregation which is in view. "And your works." The word "works" is "ergon." "Ergon" is the word for doing; that is, deeds which are performed here in the Lord's service. He says, "The last to be more than the first." The last is the Greek word "eschatos." "Eschatos" means "comparison," but comparison in terms of time – comparing a later work of Christian service with an earlier performance. He says that the later one was "polus" which means "more than." They are greater than. Greater than what? The "protos" one (the first). "Protos" is also used here in reference to time, referring to an earlier stage of Christian service.

So what do all these words put together mean? He is telling us that the believers in the Thyatira church were doing more in the way of serving the Lord and producing divine good works as they matured spiritually than they did when they began their Christian lives. The longer they were Christians, the higher was their rate of productivity. These Christian workers did not get tired of the wear-and-tear of Christian service within the angelic conflict. They were not serving the Lord on the basis of how devoted and faithful other believers were in the congregation. It didn't matter to them what anybody else was doing. It only mattered to them what they were doing. They stayed with it. Believers were not waiting for someone to give them a big emotional talk so that they'd get with it. They grabbed the opportunities to store treasures in heaven. When somebody in the congregation refused to come through with a service that they could perform, they grabbed the opportunity to do it, and to snatch the reward from heaven right from that person because of his negligence. The translation here is that "your deeds of late are greater than at first." Certain conditions produce increased production.

We have here the commendation that indicates to us, first of all, that the pastor-teacher in the Thyatira church has been doing his job of training his flock in divine viewpoint thinking. Their thinking was straight so that they understood the importance of storing treasures in heaven. It indicates that the Thyatira Christians were very positive to the guidance that they were getting from their instructor in the Word of God. They respected the concepts of doctrine.

We have here evidence that a maturing believer increasingly sees his life in terms of eternity. That's the point. *As you grow as a Christian spiritually, you will discover that you increasingly see your life in terms of eternity, and less in terms of time*. For that reason, his productivity increases. The Christian whose production does not increase as his life moves ahead is a Christian that is out of touch with what it's all about.

I realize that as our days, so shall our strength be for service. And as you get older, you will not be able to do as much in certain areas. But nevertheless, you do not retire from service in the angelic warfare. You seek to maximize your enjoyment of eternity by building upon your previous production. Experience in Christian service is very valuable and enabling you to increase your level of production. For such, the Lord Jesus Christ has a particular esteem.

Increased divine production in a church demands recognition, however, in the lines of authority in the local ministry. As individuals, we should be having the same commendation that our first works are followed by better and more works, but that should be true of a local church as well. Its earlier days should be followed by days that are increasingly better in their production. For production to be maximum in a local church ministry, you have to have lines of authority for somebody to pull it all together, and for us to maximize our production. This is what was obviously being done in Thyatira, and Jesus was very pleased with them for it.

Increased productivity over the years is a glory to God, and it's an eternal benefit to the believer, as all of these qualities that he has commended them for are structured upon the fact that these people have a source of information. This is not human positive thinking. This is the fact that they have the information of the Word of God. They have a Bible that can give them what they need to get their perspective straight, and to get their mind squared away so that their souls will function upon these concepts, so that their production will increase.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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