***A Successful Local Church

RV44-01***

We are studying the letter to the church at Philadelphia in Revelation 3:7-13. Throughout human history, there have been people who have walked with God. This has always been true. Sometimes, as in the days of Elijah, it seemed like there were very few; and, indeed there were not too many out of the total population. But always there is a remnant. Always there is a core of believers who are walking with the living God. These people know the difference between the gods that man has invented and the real and living God who created them and the world in which they live. These people knew the truth about securing eternal life as a gift from God, apart from their pathetic, human, feeble efforts of achieving it through something they could do, or in some way that they could live. These people knew the difference between human viewpoint and divine viewpoint on the issues that face life in this world. Consequently, they were far ahead of their contemporaries because they had divine viewpoint orientation. They knew the difference between what is right and what is wrong as God defines right and wrong. Consequently, their lives could be prospered, and their lives could be blessed. They could avoid a lot of scars and a lot of destructive effects upon their souls and upon their bodies.

However, divine viewpoint believers of this type have not generally been warmly received in Satan's world. They were, and are, viewed as oddballs who lack the intelligence to know better. That's why they hold the views that they do. Consequently, divine viewpoint people have never carried much power in the world in which they move, and they were always under the pressure of conforming to the majority human viewpoint thinking, and to the ways of human viewpoint. Even within religious circles, they were under pressure to get along with that which is directly contradictory to what the Scriptures had to say, and to get along with the people that they move with, in spite of the fact that those people themselves, because of what they believed, were headed for an eternity in the lake of fire.

**God is out there**

This is a heartless attitude very often carried on and very often practiced by Christians. It is as heartless as letting someone walk to the edge of a cliff (who doesn't know it's there), and for him to walk over into his destruction without crying out a word of warning. This weakness of influence, however, had a good effect, because it has always cast believers upon the ability and the power of God. The results, as we have seen from several experiences and from several examples in the Old Testament, have always been spectacular. Human weakness was tied in and connected to the power of God. Only heaven itself, someday, is going to reveal to us what God has done with this group of unappreciated but dedicated believers who have always existed in human history. We have seen that the power of God lies not in the destruction he is capable of bringing upon sinners (and He is fully capable of doing that, as he demonstrated to Elijah), but the power of God is right here in the book that you hold in your hand. Right here in the Bible (right here in the still small voice) are the propositional statements of truth that God Himself has revealed to us. It is a simple statement, but it is true and it is very profound: that *God is out there, and He is not silent*. That's the great truth that most of mankind does not understand. God is out there, and He is not silent.

That's why today, in American society, which once appreciated the Word of God and which once spoke from the frame of reference of a God who is out there who has spoken to us, that is rarely done. What you see now is American society discussing the issues of what is right and what is wrong without any reference to the fact that there is a God out there who has spoken on this subject. You see American society discussing what our attitude should be in terms of various functions of government within our society; and, what our function of government should be in terms of foreign nations, and all of that is discussed in total oblivion that God, who is out there, has spoken very definitely with very definitive guidelines, which, if practiced, would bring prosperity and blessing to us as a nation.

So, the Lord Jesus Christ, in viewing believers of this kind which He has always had, took great pleasure in opening doors to them for spiritual growth and consequent Christian service and rewards, in spite of the little power that they had (the little respect that they had) in the society in through which they moved. If it is true of anybody, it is true indeed of Philadelphia fundamentalist type believers that they just don't get any respect. But with God, they get a lot of esteem and a lot of respect. The Lord is aware of what His soldiers are in need of in the angelic conflict. He is a tremendous logistical expert; He supplies logistical grace to us; and, He supplies all of our needs in order to engage in the angelic conflict. No one can shut the door to growth in grace to the individual believer: to growth in grace; and, to growth in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. To a positive believer, that door is open, and it is open to us as a church. It is always open to us as a church, because the God who knows what we need is fully capable of supplying our needs. Logistical grace – what a marvelous provision.

We had one just this day. You know that for a long time, you've been coming to our meeting, and you've been interceding. Some of you have been sensitive about this as I have, because it's been one of the greatest burdens on my heart – that the Berean ministries have come to the point where they cannot very efficiently and very properly function without a man who is an overall superintendent of our buildings and grounds – someone who can bring it all together. But the problem was how to supply the means. For some time, we've had the man that God has provided who is eager to do it, and ready and willing, and at some sacrifice to do so. This day, I'm happy to tell you that the God of logistical grace has made the provision starting April 1st. God has always had his little people (His feeble folks) who couldn't do something as grand as having that position filled in this ministry. But He did it. He did it, and He has done it before. We've had three decades of that kind of provision – open doors. We indeed are a congregation who has come to learn (to know) what open doors mean. The Philadelphia fundamentalists were indeed the apple of God's eye.

So, we found in Revelation 3:8 that the Lord told this group of believers that he knew what their works were. He knew what they were doing. He knew their performance. He has set before them an open door: a door to spiritual development: a door to consequent Christian service: and, a door that then resulted in storing treasures in heaven. He also indicated to them that He was doing this for them because they needed this kind of divine provision, for they were a people with very little power and very little influence. So God was coming in and taking their weakness and making something spectacularly powerful out of them.

So, the last part of the verse says that, "The Lord is doing this because you have limited strength and have kept My Word." The word "and" is the Greek word "kai." This is what we call an adversative conjunction. It is used here to indicate the attitude of the Philadelphia congregation. They had little power in the society in which they moved, and they were treated from indifference to contempt. It was a great temptation for them to do something that they didn't do. It was a very great temptation for them to play ball – for them to make it possible to get along better and to be more accepted, and to compromise in order to do that.

So, this little word is an adversative, and we would translate it this way: "And yet," in order to convey what the Scriptures have to say here. The Lord says, "I recognize that you have little power in terms of influence. It is very tempting for you to try to get a little better place in the sun, and to get a little better place of influence by compromising on the things that make you, as fundamental believers, offensive to the world society in which you move, and yet you didn't do that." He says, "Instead, what you did was that you kept." And the Greek word for "kept" is "tereo." The word "tereo" means "to watch over" or "to guard." The idea here is that they were obedient to something. They kept it in terms of obeying it. It is in the aorist tense in the Greek, which means a point action. That is indicating positive volition at the point when they were faced with an issue of doctrine, and when they were faced with a principle of the Word of God. And they now had to make a decision to stand for what God has said, or to take the edge off a little bit and compromise in order to get a little bit of acceptance.

It's active. Each believer himself, by his positive volition, guarded his positive volition obedience. He exercised this guarding. It's indicative – a statement of fact. Then the Greek Bible uses the word "my," which looks like this: "ego," in order to stress personal possession on the part of the Lord Jesus Christ who is speaking here. And the thing they kept was His Word (His "logos"). This noun refers to that which is an inward thought, and which is then expressed in some external way here. Here, the idea is subject matter. That would be the best way to describe this concept that He's referring to. He's talking about "logos" in terms of subject matter. You did not compromise on my subject matter.

What is He referring to? Well, He's referring, of course, to Bible doctrine. The Bible uses this word "logos" in terms of the subject matter of doctrine. It uses it, as a matter of fact, for both good and bad doctrine. For example, in 2 Timothy 2:15: "Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the 'logos' of truth:" the subject matter of truth. There, it is being used in a positive, good way relative to the true Word of God: "But shun profane and vain babblings, for they will increase unto more ungodliness." There, the word "logos" is bad subject matter: "Will eat as does gangrene of whom are Hymenaeus and Philetus."

So, here, within these three verses you have the word "logos" used twice: once in terms of good subject matter (divine viewpoint); and, another time in terms of bad subject matter (human viewpoint). The reference here in Revelation 3:8 is to the word of the Lord Jesus Christ, which He says that He received directly from God the Father.

**The Bible**

In John 17:8, the Lord says, "For I have given unto them (to the believers) the words ("logos" in the plural) which You gave Me (the subject matter which You gave Me), and they have received them, and have known, surely, that I came out from You, and they have believed that You did send me." So, what we have here is the Lord Jesus Christ as the transmitter of the very mind of God. So, when you deal with the Bible, you are dealing with what God thinks. You really do have what God thinks. You see how absolutely insane the human race is when it does not understand that the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the Word of God – not the Koran; not the Book of Mormon; and, not the writings of the religions of the world. It is the Bible, and the Bible alone. I mean, without apology, the rest of them are wrong. They may have good ideas, but the rest of them are wrong. Only this book is right. Only the Bible is the Word of God. Only the Bible can qualify as being the words directly from the living God.

So, 1 Corinthians 2:16 identifies the words of the Lord Jesus Christ as being the mind of Christ: "For who has known the mind of the Lord that He may instruct him (the mind of God). But we have the mind of Christ." Isn't that fantastic! We believers have the mind of Christ. That is tremendous.

Sometimes, people go to school, and you wish you had the mind of an Einstein so you could do some of your schoolwork better. You see somebody who is a good student in, say, languages, and you say, "Boy, I wish I had that person's mind when it comes to learning a language. Would I love to be able to do that?" Well, how about being able to think like almighty God? That's not bad either. That's pretty good in itself. This is exactly what happens.

It's not just a little thing to come out to a Berean Church service. It is a fantastic thing, as long as we are instructing in the Word of God, and putting it out to people in some usable form that they can grasp and use. That is transmitting out of the printed word into the mentality of your soul, the very mind of almighty God, and the consequences of that are absolutely beyond our imagination.

The Word of Jesus Christ refers to His commandments, which the Philadelphia believers obeyed, and consequently, they were prospered for doing so. This principle is stated for us in 1 John 3:22: "And whatever we ask, we receive of Him because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." The reason the Lord responds to our prayers is because we are standing firm on His word. We are standing by Him, and He stands by us.

Whatever your problems are in life; whatever your unhappiness is; whatever your conflicts; and, whatever anything else, I can guarantee you that that does not come out of the mind of Christ that's in you. Those problems and those difficulties come out of your own thinking; out of your own human viewpoint situation; and, out of your own carnality. When you function on the mind of Christ, you become an absolutely fantastic human being. That is true of every person. Look at another person. It may be unbelievable that that can be a fantastic person. But once the mind of Christ is functioning, nobody is excluded.

So, to the Philadelphia Christians, the Lord had a great promise to make – that He was going to open doors of spectacular blessings to them. Why? "Because you kept My Word. Because you kept My Word, you had My thinking. Because you had my thinking, you were acting in a way that I could bless." All of our actions, as you know, come from your thinking. The Bible says, "As a man thinks, so is he." What we do is the result of our thinking. That's why, while it is important that external sins should be condemned, unfortunately, preachers do not come down as hard on mental attitude sins, which is where the Bible says that they begin. James makes it very clear that the sin originated right up here in your head. First it's a line of thought. It's a line of human viewpoint thinking so that it moves toward evil, and then that evil becomes overtly expressed. The things that we should be concerned about, when we see external immorality, is: what is the problem of the internal mental attitude that permits that thing to express itself outwardly? That's what these believers had. They had a right mental attitude. Why? Because they had the mind of Jesus Christ. Therefore, you could almost say that they could do no wrong.

Obviously, the believers in Philadelphia then stood for sound Bible doctrine. They were fans of doctrine, and they were devotedly true to it. In Romans 6:17, the apostle Paul expresses this concept well: "But God be thanked, that whereas we were the servants of sin (the sin nature), you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you." Whereas you were the slaves of the sin nature, you became freed when doctrine came into your mind, and you became positive in subjecting yourself to that.

So, what does that mean about these people? What was it that Jesus Christ could so commend about their attitude toward doctrine? Well, for one thing, I'm sure that they did not pretend that they did not have a message from God. Some Christians just go around apologetically. They just hate to say, "I've had a message from God." They just hate to say, "I know what God thinks about this subject and about that subject. I know what God thinks about that conduct that you're engaged in. I know what God thinks about that principle of government that you're pursuing," and so on. People just hesitate to be able to say, "I know what God thinks upon this subject or that subject." The reason Christians are intimidated is because they are made to feel like that's very arrogant. But what in the world have we been saying here? You've seen out of the Word of God itself that when you take the principles of doctrine into your mind, you do have the mind of God. You do have the thinking of God. You do have His opinion in the matters that pertain to our lives.

So, I'm sure these people in Philadelphia didn't go around with some fake little humility, pretending that they did not have a message from God, and furthermore, that that message condemned the pagan religions as false and satanic. Anything that those religious systems were suggesting that was not compatible with the Word of God, they said, "That's wrong. You're out of line." They made no bones about it.

Today, the charismatic movement carries a great weight among some segments of the Christian church. Many preachers are very fearful. They're very intimidated about coming out and matching that performance to the Word of God and saying, "The claim to healing is not there in comparison to the New Testament practice of that gift. The claims of speaking in tongues (in foreign languages) is not taking place as per the example of New Testament Scripture. And the same goes for the whole claims to miracles."

I saw a television ad today advertising Oral Roberts University, and their big punch line was "the place where miracles are a way of life." The only miracle that's a way of life on Oral Roberts University is the fact that God has not exercised some of that power of His to wipe them off the map. That's the only miracle that's taking place there all the time. Eventually, he's going to get around to doing exactly that. But who's going to stand up in church and say, "That's false. That needle-pointed head of that tower of prayer that claims such great power for God is not the power of God. It's the power for his majesty the devil." How are you going to know to say that? By looking in Scripture and saying, "What does God say?" Then you say, "What does Oral say?" And pretty soon you've got the picture. Either there's a 900-foot Jesus, or there isn't. You have to look in the Bible? Either the Lord is going around picking up universities in His hands and putting them back down, or He isn't. This whole concept of the miraculous is a false claim.

When the Philadelphia Christians were faced with that, I guarantee you that the reason the Lord was pleased with them was because they said, "You're wrong. You're out of line with the Word of God. What you're teaching will bring destruction to you if you persist in it."

Furthermore, they didn't pretend that the Bible was unclear as to what God requires of the sinner for salvation. They did not pretend that, even though you have a religious system that claims to look to Jesus Christ for salvation, then you slip in your water baptism; you slip in your Lord's supper; or, as the New Testament Jews were doing, you slip in the rite of circumcision, and whatever else they brought into the picture, that that's alright. How many preachers are going to stand up and say that whole congregations, that zealously claim to be loyal to Jesus Christ and disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, have a doctrine of salvation that includes the elements of human personal works and rituals in order to be saved. And when they have interjected that personal element of human doing, they have neutralized the ground of grace, which the Bible says is the only ground upon which God will save a person – and therefore they are lost.

There are denominations with fantastic people in themselves – moral people who are going to live their whole lives; they're going to die; and, they're going to explode into horror: "My God, I'm out here, and I'm facing the lake of fire. Do you know who this is? Do you know who I am? You don't understand. You must have made a mistake." They're the people of Matthew 7:21-23. God didn't make a mistake. The horror of their condition is going to be realized when it's too late to turn it around. How heartless not to warn these people that if they try to approach God on what they are taught as a way of salvation by their particular group, it is going to be to their destruction, and that they need to go back to the Scripture.

The Philadelphia saints didn't pretend that it was all right for you to readjust God's plan of salvation and to pretend that some things were optional just so you wouldn't offend the people who had a different viewpoint. The Philadelphia Christians didn't pretend that Scripture was unreliable and laced with human error. They didn't pretend that the Bible was not delivered by God to them in an inerrant form. They did not tolerate human viewpoint opinions in place of the Scriptures, and they looked upon the Bible as a book which God had reliably delivered to them. So, when they read something in the Bible, they knew it was, "Thus saith the Lord."

I was somewhat interested to observe an article that was sent to me. I'd like to just read you a comment here. It's from the Parade insert in the Sunday paper ... It's an article on Billy Graham. In the course of this article, he is mentioning the people he has been associated with. He says, "Muhammad Ali came recently and spent the day with me. I think he'd like to serve the Lord in some capacity. He's had a double blow: Larry Holmes' fists; and, Mr. Carter's loss. I think he is in a position to be a peacemaker for the Lord between East and West, and between Islam and Christianity. I'm going to talk to him."

Some of you may have studied our study of Islam. We're rushing desperately to get those studies edited, because that's a very valuable section, since this group now plays such a prominent place in the world. You know very well that the five or six basic pillars of Islam include a way of salvation that will only take the person directly into hell. They reject the person of Jesus Christ as being the God-man; the Son of God; and therefore, the only true Savior. They accept the false notion that Muhammad is the final prophet of God. Their refusal to accept Jesus Christ condemns them to the lake of fire.

Now, what does Muhammad Ali have to contribute in service to the Lord in any capacity as a peacemaker between East and West, and between Islam and Christianity? On a human level, he might perform that, but when he performed that, that could hardly be called (I think) a service to the Lord, because the Lord is not involved in anything that the Muslims do, any more than the Lord is involved with anything that the Mormons do; that the Roman Catholics do; or, that anybody else does on the basis of rejecting the only plan of salvation that God has offered and that He functions on – the grace plan. And I don't care who you are; what group you're with; or, what prestige and power you carry. If you have denied God's grace plan, you've lost it all.

I find it very puzzling how Muhammad Ali can make a contribution to the Lord's service. But to have Billy Graham say that is going to get a lot of Christians (who are untaught) thinking that it's not anything too bad when Muhammad Ali gets up and he makes his praise to God (to Allah) and his thanks to Muhammad after every fight for the fact that he has won.

Another article that I found interesting recently that I want to read to you is from the Los Angeles Times. It has to do with this business of standing for what the Scriptures say, and the attitude of our society of putting us under pressure by saying, "You don't know what God thinks. You can't say that this is what God thinks. You can't say that this is the opinion of the living God. That's arrogance. Who do you think you are? For you to say that is to condemn other Christians who are just as sincere, and other religious people are just as sincere as you are." Well, they're just as sincere, but they're sincerely wrong, because there is a standard by which we compare that. That is the Word of God.

This comes from the Los Angeles Times. The article is entitled "Fundamentalist Comics Defame Religions of Others." We're talking about those comic books put out by Chick publications. You have probably seen them. One series is a Crusader series. It's a very interesting series. This article says:

"Comic books defaming the beliefs of Catholics, Jews, Mormons and adherents of Eastern religions, among others, are being sold by the thousands in evangelical Christian bookstores across the United States. Anyone who has seen Superman, Batman, or Donald Duck comic books will readily recognize the full-colored versions published by Chick Publications of nearby Cucamonga Encino. But publisher Jack Chick's Crusader comics are devoted to neither fantasy nor humor. Very little is intentionally funny about these 59-cent proselytizing publications recommended by Chick for reading by adults and teenagers. His comic books are professionally illustrated, sometimes with lurid, violent scenes, including drawings that depict human sacrifice; torture; blood drinking; and, cannibalism.

"While preaching a hellfire and brimstone message, they denounce Freemasonry as a cult. They suggest that Satan attacks through politics and finance with a secret worldwide group called the Illuminati, and they claim the Roman Catholic pontiff really does not control the church. Chick scorns rock music as the devil's instrument; describes the theory of evolution as a hoax; warns against Ouija boards, astrology, playing cards, and romantic novels; and, suggests that occult killings and that human sacrifices by Satanists occur often in the United States. Chick's technique combines fictional accounts of two born-again Christians; Scripture quotations; biblical stories and interpretations; footnote references; and, in one notable instance, a true story claim.

"His handsome, muscular crusaders include Timothy Emerson Clark: 21; white; and, the son of a U.S. Ambassador and former Green Beret in Vietnam. Another crusader is James Carter: 20; black; expert street fighter; and, the former head of a narcotics ring. In their adventures, the two have smuggled microfilm translations of the Bible into communist Romania; exposed murderous devil worshipers; and, defeated mass murderers. While they go about saving souls in "meanwhile, back in the Bible" interjections, Clark and Carter also serve as sounding boards for Chick's notions and fundamentalist interpretations of Scripture.

"Since 1974, Chick has published a dozen crusader comics signed by JTC, and more is known about his ideas through them than is known about the publisher himself. Chick's secretary, who requested anonymity, said her boss has a longstanding policy against giving interviews. But she talked a little over the telephone, describing Chick as mid-fifty-ish and a Baptist, but emphasizing that Chick Publications is non-denominational, and run to make a profit. 'He started on his own kitchen table years ago doing this part-time,' the secretary said."

Now, what's the gist of that? Whatever else may be true or untrue about Mr. Chick's points of view and the things that he conveys in his comics, he is basically biblical. He is faced with the fact that some of the things he deals with are in terms of the power of Satan upon this earth that are just too staggering to the human mind to accept – the kinds of things that cause the book of Revelation to be an ignored book in most churches today. It is too hard to read that book; to take it literally; and, to believe that those things can actually possibly happen in this world: this fantastic nonsense of ten nations getting together and being ruled by a powerful man who becomes a world dictator; and, all of the forces of nature – these tremendous plagues. Well, you will think that you're back in Moses' time.

Incidentally, the ten nations are now complete. As of January 1st, Greece came in, and you've got your ten nations – a western confederacy, indeed, just exactly as the Scriptures predicted. So, things are moving right along.

But for this comic book to present such biblical concepts brings this kind of scorn. Why? Because, in the process, he takes the Philadelphia church attitude, and he will put it in his footnotes exactly the errors of what Mormonism thinks; of what the Jehovah's Witnesses think; and, of what the Roman Catholic Church teaches, and it's all right there so that there is no question about the fact that he is saying, "The Bible says this; we can understand it; and therefore, we must condemn what the Bible condemns."

Another article that I found interesting from The Dallas Morning News is entitled "Schlafly Religion Runs off Baptists." This is an article concerning Phyllis Schlafly, who is a very fantastic lady, and who has been in the forefront of shattering the ERA movement in this country. She is a Roman Catholic. Here's an interesting problem that this article brings up. What kind of relationships do you have with people who themselves are in favor of certain moral godly principles that you stand for as a Christian? The article says:

"Saying that Roman Catholics do not believe in the fundamentals of the faith, a nationally known Tennessee preacher has withdrawn from the 1981 James Robison Bible conference in Fort Worth to avoid sharing the podium with Phyllis Schlafly. Dr. Curtis Hutson, editor of The Fundamentalist Weekly Journal Sword of the Lord, said he could not share the rostrum with Mrs. Schlafly or any other Roman Catholic. Mrs. Schlafly, a conservative anti-feminist, will be among the speakers at Robison's conference which will open Wednesday at the Tarrant County Convention Center. When Robison's staff contacted Hutson about speaking to the conference, Hutson was told that only Bible believing fundamentalist preachers would share the platform. Hutson wrote in the current issue of his publication that he said he saw an advertisement of the conference that listed Mrs. Schlafly, and he wrote: 'Mrs. Schlafly is a Roman Catholic, and therefore, I assume does not believe in the fundamentals of the faith.' Hutson was in California this week, and unavailable for comment. But a spokesman from Robison's evangelistic office in Hurst confirmed the independent Baptist preacher had canceled his appearance for the reasons he stated in his journal editorial.

"'The Catholic church does not accept the Bible as the inspired inerrant Word of God,' Hutson wrote. They add to it books of the Apocrypha: early writings not included in the Bible that were not the inspired Word of God and ought not to be a part of the Bible. They place human tradition on the same level as the Bible.' Hutson, former pastor of Forest Hills Baptist church in Atlanta, succeeded John R. Rice as editor of The Sword last year when Rice became ill. Rice died in December. The national publication is widely known among evangelicals of all denominations. Hutson's name was among the speakers listed in advertisements and brochures announcing Robison's annual Bible conference, which runs through Saturday.

"Explaining the reasons for his reversal, Hutson wrote, 'A careful study of the Roman Catholic religion will reveal that much of its teaching is based on tradition. The religion is a growing accumulation of error through the years, with new doctrines being added continually, like the doctrine that the body of Mary was taken to heaven, which was adopted November 1st, 1950. Catholics do not believe in the substitutionary death of Christ since they teach that sins are purged in an unscriptural place called Purgatory.' He said he could share an anti-ERA platform with Mrs. Schlafly, but: 'I cannot speak at a Bible conference with a Roman Catholic lady.'

"Asked about Hutson's remark, Mrs. Schlafly, reached in Birmingham, Alabama, where she was speaking at an anti-communist rally, said, 'I do believe in the Bible. I do believe it is the inspired Word of God. He (Hutson) doesn't understand what Catholics believe, and he shows his own prejudices with his statements.' Mrs. Schlafly said she could respond in kind, but: 'I don't think it would be the right thing to do, given the nature of the conference.'"

Now, what do you think? Was that right, or was that wrong? I think that Mr. Hutson put it squarely in the right perspective. There are people that do agree with us on biblical principles. Certainly, the whole concept of the Moral Majority having an impact on American politics is a concept that follows the fact that there are people who have common values, and these are biblical values. But when we join forces with those who agree with us, for example, on the subject of morality, we join forces with him on that ground – not on a biblical ground. I may believe in a certain set of moral principles because there are biblical. Someone else, who is an unbeliever, may also believe those same principles for some reason other than the Bible. That doesn't make any difference. God's principles are going to prosper.

You may put oil in your car in the oil compartment because you believe the manual tells you to do it. Somebody else may do it just because his grandmother used to do it that way, so he always feels he should do it that way. It doesn't matter. The car is going to be benefited as long as there's oil in there, and not water. So, it doesn't matter what your reason is. The principle is going to be blessed by God if it's His principle.

So, it is a problem, isn't it, to get up in a Bible conference and to say, "I am here as a representative of the Lord Jesus Christ and of the Word of God, which He has revealed (which is His mind)," and then to find yourself sharing in a Bible conference (a public speaking – a public performance) with someone who does not really believe that the Bible is the Word of God, because obviously Mrs. Schlafly, as a good Roman Catholic, believes there are certain books in the Old Testament that just aren't the Word of God. If you've ever read the Apocrypha, you'll shake your head in unbelief that anybody could take those books seriously. But without the Apocrypha, you don't have any purgatory. You don't have any number of major doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church that are based upon those books.

So, on the basis of biblical principles, wherever you get them from, we can get together. But on the basis of the Word of God and of fellowship as mutual believers in Christ, you can't get together with anybody except those who receive the Word of God as the Word of the Lord. That's what the Philadelphia Christians were characterized by.

**A Successful Local Church**

So, success in a local church ministry amounts to what? Success in a local church ministry can only be measured by one thing: whether the people who attend are given an opportunity to get the authoritative Word of God delivered to them on the basis of the original languages of Scripture, so that the preacher is not slipping something in and conning them with some ideas and viewpoints of his own, and that they are presented in a usable form that they can relate to; can understand; can take hold of; can believe; and, can store in their human spirits, consequently, because of their positive volition, and begin functioning upon it. If a church is doing that with God, it is successful. That same church will not necessarily be large in numbers. It might be, but it usually isn't. It won't necessarily have all the money in the world that it needs. It won't be held in high esteem in the community. It won't be viewed as the people that you should turn to when you want to have some advice on what the community should do. You will find that that group that is successful with God is often viewed as being most unsuccessful by the standards of the world, and even by the standards of other churches.

The Thyatira church resulted in the Roman Catholic Church. The Thyatira church added the human viewpoint of paganism to the Word of Christ in order to produce the harlot church of the tribulation period – the church out of which Roman Catholicism itself has evolved.

Back when we studied the church at Sardis, we saw that their sound doctrinal statement, in time, was something that they became indifferent to, and the Word of Christ, because of their carnality, fell into a deadness in their souls.

So, here you have the contrast from Thyatira paganism, with human viewpoint incorporated, producing the religious systems that you have everywhere today, including Islam, and Mormonism, and Jehovah's Witnesses, and all the rest. The Sardis church held to true principles of doctrine, but they failed to understand the role of God the Holy Spirit within the individual believer's life within the local congregation, and to be able to relate to the Word of God in such a way that God the Holy Spirit can lead. God the Holy Spirit is not going to lead you by giving you a vision. If you get such a vision, you sure better see your doctor. He is not going to lead you by letting you hear voices as you lie on your bed at night. If you do, you better check in. Something is wrong.

God the Holy Spirit is going to lead you. He is eager to lead you, but is going to lead you from the contents of this book – from the propositional statements of truth of doctrine. That is the mind of Christ. That's what He takes out of your human spirit, and He brings automatically to your thinking. Without your even thinking, you are going to make a decision and you're going to take an action. It's often made quickly, on the spur of the moment, and God the Holy Spirit is able to take out of your human spirit the viewpoints that God has put in there (from His divine viewpoint storage), and shove it right up into your mind, and your directive mind is going to have the mental attitude to make the right decision and to function on it. That is no fairy tale. That, folks, is the way it really works.

Can you see why the Lord Jesus was excited about the Philadelphia church – why He looked upon them and found them indeed to be the apple of His eye? But they don't have anything on us. As attractive as this church was to Him then, you and I, individually, and as a local body, can be to Him today. How? By the same principle: that we do not deny His Word; that we have not compromised the Word of God; and, that we have kept what He has told us. Learn it; obey it; and, be a winner.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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