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Revelation

Chapter 3 - Revealing the Secrets to Overcoming Darkness

Financial Dependence Obscures the Light (vs. 14-22)

Revelation 3:14-22: “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: ‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. ‘So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. ‘Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. ‘Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.

‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. ‘He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”

Revelation has been demonstrating to us that the church has a purpose and the purpose of the church is to demonstrate the wonderful gospel of Christ. It gives a kind of metaphor, a picture, and that is the picture of light. That as light gives you hope, it enlightens. It reveals. Certainly, it warms and it gives a lot of benefits. But it is an interesting picture and a wonderful picture of who Christ is. He is the Light of the world, and John

demonstrates this and repeats this over and over again. Therefore, as Matthew tells us we're to be a light set on a hill, and we're to let our light so shine before men that they would see our good works and glorify God in heaven. It shouldn't surprise us, then, that when you come to the Book of Revelation, Jesus is standing among candlesticks, and that is the seven churches. He says, "Now, your job is to light and to be the light."

As we've oftentimes quoted from Ephesians 5, God tells us that once we were darkness, but now we are light and He tells us to therefore shine. What does it mean to shine? Well, the very first church, Ephesus, begins to reveal to us that there is no light if there is no love; if there is no demonstration of the love of God, because that is the light. For God so loved you. It is the very thing that gives people hope. It is the very thing that changes people's lives. If you believe that God loves you and you believe in the power of His love to overcome anything, even death, you proclaim that and it is in the proclamation of that that we believe is the power of God. This is why Paul writes in Romans 1, "I'm not ashamed of

the gospel, for I know that that's where the power is.” And so we defeat evil by proclaiming light. You want to eradicate evil? Then you want to proclaim that which brings light. I've never seen somebody take an unlit candle and blow it on. Have you ever seen it? The perception is that maybe we can make it happen, make it light and God says, “No, you have to light it.” And it's about the display of light, and clearly I think one of the things that He says in the very beginning to the church at Ephesus, that your job isn't to put out darkness. That's not our job. Our job is to shine the light, and by shining the light, darkness goes away. So, He begins to reveal to the Church of Ephesus that “You need to let your light shine.”

When you begin to see the different churches, in each case, He talks to them about certain things that they're wrestling with and things that are hindering the light from shining. In the Church of Smyrna there was a concern about their fears of death. When you consider the fact that one of the things that we're conveying is that the love of God is more powerful than anything, even death,

we need to be very clear about this. So that when difficult times come and fear begins to creep in; I mean, if in fact we fear an inferior power such as death, then it makes the superior power look inferior. What's the superior power? Well, the love of God. If we're fearing something inferior to that, then what does it make God's superior power look like? It looks like it will lose. So, we're to proclaim this in such a way that we know Whom we have believed and we are persuaded that He's able to keep us and keep it until that day. That the confidence is there and to not have the confidence is really to obscure the grand light that God is more powerful than anything, and His love is more powerful than anything. Nothing could separate me from the love of God. Are you afraid of something? Why should I be afraid? What can man do to me? So, it is in the bravery that the light shines the brightest and He talks to the Church of Smyrna in that regard.

All the way through, you deal with things like compromise and you deal with things like feigning. Just because you call darkness light, doesn't make it light. It just makes your

light darkness, but it doesn't actually change things. God says you have to be real and if you're not real then it can't be real light. I mean, you can go around saying all day long that some dark place is light, but it's not, and it just makes you invalid and it detracts from the veracity of Scripture. So, being genuine and being real is all part of the light and you see that with the churches. So that in each case He deals with not only us compromising in certain areas, but in some ways, making deals with the devil. He turns to the church and He says, "Look, the world is going to tell you that you broadcast, you put on the glitter, you put on the ritz and that's light, but it's just glitter, and the problem with glitter is it only works if there's light. But if the church goes around declaring with grand glitter who they are, there is no light in that; if they go into a dark world, glitter doesn't shine." God has called us to be light and He calls us to be real and He calls us to be genuine. You can go into the realm of fame and you can tell everybody that you're light, but it doesn't make it anymore that you are light.

Faithful, really, as He came to the last church that we looked at is one of the grand keys of the Church of Philadelphia, and God is saying, "If you're not faithful, then where is the light in that?" I mean, where's the hope in telling people that you can sort of trust in God some of the time, and maybe He's your partial source? God says, "I'm the One that's faithful and true. You've got to put all your trust in Me. I'm the One that opens doors and I'm the One that closes doors. If you don't put your trust in Me, then how will they know?" So, it's the confidence all the way through that He's wanting to convey.

The same thing is going to be true with the Church of Laodicea, and it's that church that we're going to look at today. It's pretty well known, not only because it's the last church that's mentioned, but we oftentimes use the phrase, "We wish that you were cold or hot." I think in some ways we kind of misunderstand what He's trying to convey because He's not just simply making a reference to mediocrity. Although, I think a lot of people pull that out of the text. What He's fundamentally saying is that you're not at a benefit either way, and He's going to be

showing that look, hot water is benefit and cold water is beneficial, but lukewarm is not. So, He's going to be talking about effectiveness of the church and what makes the church effective and what makes it ineffective. What is it that would cause Christ to say, "It's a stench in My nostrils"?

So, we come to an interesting passage, and for you to maybe understand a little bit better some of the pictures that He uses, because within Revelation we're also going to understand that He's going to be continuing to use pictures throughout Scripture that the people are familiar with. So, the Church of Laodicea lives in the city of Laodicea, and in Laodicea there are certain things that are happening in that particular city that they're well acquainted with.

The opening passage in Revelation 1 shows Christ walking around the candlesticks. The point is, "I'm very familiar with where you live and I'll tell you how I know." So, He begins to describe certain things that are happening in their particular regions. He's going to be talking about, "I wish that you were cold or hot." So, naturally, that's

probably something to do with springs and the water in that particular area that the Church of Laodicea or the city of Laodicea is dealing with. He's going to be talking about eye salve and there must be something about eye salve that is somehow tied to the Church of Laodicea. He's going to be talking about buying things, buying from Him. He'll even say, "You need to spend your money and buy something from Me." So, there must be something to do with money within the church. So, as we look at the passage, what we're going to see is that all of these things are part of the setting of the city of Laodicea.

About 30 years ago, from the time in which Revelation was written; about 30 years prior, the city of Laodicea had a great earthquake. The earthquake literally leveled almost all of the city. The city was a fairly good and thriving city. In fact, even more so, they had a lot of wealth in their city. The Roman government came in and they offered to help rebuild the city. The city said, "No, thank you. We'll do it ourselves." So, within a short period of time, they actually reconstructed the city, even to a grander way that they had ever been. In fact, the city

ruins even today, if you were to go there, and I quote one of the historians, it says, "The city ruins bear the stamp of Roman extravagance and luxury." It was one of the grandest places in which there were all kinds of things. Of course we understand, according to history, it had tremendous fertile soil in the particular area. Besides the fertile soil, they were a flourishing trade route. So, there was a lot of money flowing because of that. It was a place of arts and they contributed to the sciences, they contributed to literature. They had grand and beautiful monuments that were hard to compare with any other city. It's probably one of the greatest and wealthiest cities. But there were two things that they were known for the most and that was one, their banking in which not only did they have major banks there, but they minted their own coins. So, if you mint your own coins, I think you have an advantage. Aesclepius was one of the people that they put on the coins because they kind of worshipped the god of medicine so that was one of the coins. Apollo was and Zeus was one of the coins and of course, they would have the emperors, which put them in good with the Roman government. So, they kind of meant

some of those things. But it was a place in which there was a lot of money flowing. There was also something else there, and I mentioned that on one of the coins, Aesclepius was worshipped, being that which is drawn to the medical field. They had a large medical place that focused on ophthalmology, more specifically on dealing with the eyes, and they made a tremendous amount of money selling eye salve for the healing of the eyes. They did have some disadvantage in the city and one of the disadvantages that they had in the city was their water. Interestingly enough, to the north of them was a good-sized city Hierapolis, which had hot springs. It was those hot springs that kind of made their way down, some of them, to the region Laodicea. But the hot springs were of course, very valuable in that particular city because of the fact that it brought a lot of health benefits and therapeutic aid. They were about 10 miles to the north. About 11 miles to the Southeast, it was a city by the name of Colossae. Sound familiar? Actually, you'll see these three cities, which are pretty much a tri-city area, mentioned in the Book of Colossians. About 11 miles to the South was Colossae, and Colossae had nice cold fresh

water, great water. But Laodicea, by the time some of the springs got down to them, and what we understand even today, if you go and look at some of the region, and in fact they have some of the pipes of the aqueducts that are there, what you'll see is that they have a calcareous calcium build up inside the pipes to where it was literally almost enclosing the pipes because this kind of lime and calcium began to deposit. In some regard, even had some kind of sulfur in it, so that as the water would come down from hotter springs, by the time it made it to Laodicea, it became lukewarm. So, in all these things, God begins to talk to them in regard to the things that they're dealing with within their own surroundings, and it's God's way of saying, "I know where you live. I know what you're dealing with, and I know the difficulties that you have, but let Me use these as analogies." See, that's what God's doing in your life, if you think about it. There are things that He's talking to you about that you're involved in, and you go, "It's like He knows me." And He goes, "Yeah, I know where you live. I know exactly what's happening to you, and I'm talking to you through these things." So, the

word of God begins to become relevant to the very things that we're having to deal with in our life.

As we come to this passage, we're going to see Christ talking to the church and revealing what their problem is by virtue of their surroundings. So, He paints this interesting picture.

(Revelation 3:14) “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write...”

Now, He's going to establish who He is, and this is very important that you understand this because who He is, is going to begin to convey where they're going wrong.

He uses an interesting phrase,

“... The Amen...”

Or “*amēn*” in the Hebrew, but the word is actually a Hebrew word. The fact that He uses it is telling us that there's quite a large Jewish audience there. Of course, we know that in one particular setting they had literally shipped 2000 Jews in there. So, we know that there's a large Jewish community.

The fact that He starts off saying, “I am the Amen,” and then if you look at the next phrase,

“... the faithful and true...”

“Faithful and true,” basically is the same word as “Amen”. So, it's almost like He says to the Jew and to the Greek. As “Amen” means faithful and true, He is reiterating the fact, “You can trust Me.”

The problem oftentimes is that we, in our own endeavors, and if in fact, we have any accomplishments under our belt, begin to put our trust in ourselves and the things which we use to in some way bolster our abilities, maybe money. So, God begins, like we oftentimes say with a license plate, “In God we trust,” and you do have it on your dollar bills, but it doesn't mean that man is trusting in God, and God is reminding us, “You can trust Me. I'm the One that's faithful. I'm the One that's true. I'm never going to leave you. I'm not going to disappoint you. I'm not going to abandon you. So, you can trust Me.” And you basically ask the question, “Well, who is it that I can trust?”

And He goes,

“...the Beginning of the creation...”

Now, don't misread that. The text is not actually saying that Jesus was the first of the being created. What it's saying is the source of all creation. Why is He putting that in? Because you and I need to understand that everything is in the realm of Christ's control. In fact, one of the things that He states is He says, “It was the Father's good pleasure to put everything in My control.” So, the declaration is that “I know that you think that you're manipulating your life and you're controlling things, but you need to understand I'm the One that controls everything. And if you'll come to Me, I'll be faithful and true to you. These other things will disappoint you, but I'll take care of you.”

“... The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning...”

Or the source,

“... of the creation of God, says this:

(Revelation 3:15) ‘I know your deeds...”

Once again, the emphasis is in the perfect tense, meaning “I completely understand where you are and what you're going through and what you're doing.” More specifically, when He's making reference to deeds, “What your business is, what you're involved in, how you're spending your life.”

“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold...”

You're neither really beneficial in refreshing nor helping anybody in that regard,

“... nor hot...”

You're not beneficial in being therapeutic or comforting or healing in anything that you do. So, the reference really is in the ineffectiveness of your ministry and you're not affecting anybody in any way in any good form. Why? Because basically, you're lukewarm.

(Revelation 3:16) “So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold...”

He's not saying that hot or cold is bad. He's saying, “Because you're neither, then you are ineffective. You have no value. Colossae or Hierapolis both have an

advantage, but Laodicea, you understand what this is like. So, you have no effectiveness, no usefulness to Me.”

If you look in verse 17, it really gets to the heart of the problem.

(Revelation 3:17) “Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy...”

Now the point is that they're obviously putting their trust in their ability to make money, the fact that it's a rich community. The interesting picture of the Roman government comes in and says, “We will help you.” “We don't need your help. We can do it ourselves. Leave me alone. I've got this.” That famous phrase. How many times have you been in trouble, had an issue, and somebody said, “Well, have you prayed?” and you answered, “No, I got this.” You turn to God, “No, I got this, I got this.”

(Revelation 3:17) “Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing...”

The problem is that you don't know, and interesting description here, “that you're afflicted by misery. That you're miserable and to be pitied.” Of course, they

perceive themselves as honorable and noble because of the fact that they have all of this, and really, without any kind of honor or influence or position. That's the word "poor" that you see within the text, and He throws in, in case that wasn't enough, "blind and naked". "Oh, I know where I'm going." "You don't know where you're going." Of course, they would be very clear about this because they've had blind people come to the city to come to partake of their medications. "But you're blind and you're naked. You're in a shameful state." Well, no, no, we're very dignified because we take care of our own business. We can handle it. That's what makes us important, right? Because we can handle our own problems. We've got this."

Now, verse 18 is very interesting because you'd never think that you would hear God ask you to buy anything, but He uses the term "buy". Why does He use the term "buy"? Well, what we're going to find is we're actually going into a realm and we're dealing largely with very wealthy businesspeople. So, Jesus is going to be saying, "Ok, you want to do business? We'll do business. You're

going to need to buy something. Because the state in which you are right now is bankrupt, and you need to do some trading. You need to get rid of what you have and buy something valuable.”

So, the passage reads this way,

(Revelation 3:18) “I advise you to buy from Me...”

So, we're doing a business deal with Christ, right?

“...from Me gold refined by fire...”

That's a picture, whether you read it in Peter or you read it in Thessalonians or wherever you want to read it, it's a testing or trying. Trials are going to come. “You're going to have to go through some difficulty to actually become wealthy because your problem is that you have no faith in Me. Your faith is in you. Your trust is in you, what you can do, what you can produce; the things that you can bring about. So, you're going to need to go through some hard times in order that you might see just what you really need.”

(Revelation 3:18) “I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments...”

“You need to get yourself clothed and pursue righteousness and purity.” Of course, that probably wasn't a part of their focus or desire because of the fact that they had everything, and why be pure and holy, right? That's not really a necessary ingredient.

“...so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.”

“Let the Spirit of God really anoint your eyes, so you might see the unseen.”

That's kind of that picture, if you look with me in 2 Corinthians 2 that Paul makes mention of as he deals with a group of people that clearly are focused on money. The same thing is true with the Church of Corinth.

His statement is,

(2 Corinthians 2:17) “For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.”

In other words, we're doing this for the Lord.

He says,

(2 Corinthians 4:4) “... the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light...”

And the reason why they're blinded is because of the fact that the church is involving themselves in other endeavors and really perceiving themselves to be the answer and not God.

If you come to the end of 2 Corinthians 4, his statement is this,

(2 Corinthians 4:16) “Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.”

Which is basically telling us that this outer man is not that which is going to really bring about better in our lives.

(2 Corinthians 4:17) “For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

(2 Corinthians 4:18) while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

“You're blind to the eternal things.” The reason why He calls the Church of Laodicea blind is because the only things they can see are the temporal, and that's what they're focused on. He goes, “So, you've missed it. You've missed the things that are valuable, like faith. You've missed the things that are valuable, like the love of God. But more than that, you've missed that whole valuable thing of putting your complete trust in Me for everything that you need, believing Me to be your source rather than perceiving yourself to be source. Are you so blind that you actually think that you're the source of your benefits? Ok, we've got a real problem here.” Now, the fact is He tells us that there has to be a payment, and I think to me that's

probably one of the most interesting things within the passage.

If you were to do a parallel in the text and look at one of the passages that relate to this as well, if I could have you turn to Colossians 2. Which, by the way, if you come to the end of Chapter 4, you'll see Laodicea mentioned a number of times starting with Colossians 4:15, I believe.

But if you go in Colossians 2, Paul writes to the Church of Colossae, which is once again, just to the South, about 11 miles.

(Colossians 2:1) “For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face,

(Colossians 2:2) that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love...”

How do you do that? How do you knit together in love? Let me tell you how you don't knit together in love. You don't knit together in love saying, “I got this. I got this. I

can handle it myself. You do your thing. I'll do my thing. I'll handle myself.” That's not how you knit together.

The passage goes on and says,

“that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth...”

Oh, wow. Why would he bring that up?

“... attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself,

(Colossians 2:3) in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

But you're not going to find the treasures of wisdom and knowledge of Christ by trusting in yourself. You're going to miss those treasures. You need to buy something here.

Colossians 3, interesting text, it says,

“Colossians 3:1) “Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above...”

We're not seeking the things above, are we?

“...where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

(Colossians 3:2) Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.”

(Colossians 3:5) “Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity...”

That’s putting on the clean clothes, right?

“... passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.”

(Colossians 3:6) For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come...”

“You have a problem Church of Laodicea.”

They go, “What problem?”

“Ok. So, you don't see it?”

“See what?”

“You're not trusting in God.”

“So? I don't need to.”

Ok, that's a big problem. The question you have to ask yourself is, how valuable is your relationship with God? They were willing to rebuild their city out of their own pocket. Isn't that pretty interesting? You're willing to pay

for that, so that the grandeur and the honor and the glory; they would be clothed and arrayed in great cloth. So, the perception is, of course, "We're great people because we paid a dear price to have the city as glorious as it is and it has my name on it." And God goes, "Ok. You don't understand. I mean, you're really naked right now. You're standing pretty bare. You're not seeing the things." And the problem is when you're in this state, you're not providing any refreshment to anybody, nor are you providing any healing to anybody. Because there's nothing when you say, "I've got this" that will ever help anybody substantially in anything of their life. The one thing that the church has to give to people is a sense of come to Jesus. Like the woman at the well, He's going to give you water and you'll never thirst again. Like the one that needed healing by the pool, He's the one that gives you healing, and we can proclaim that it's Jesus. But if we try to, "I'll take care of you. I'll do it. I'll help you out." What about God? "We don't need Him." You'll never help them because the things that you have to offer them are going to be things that are only going to detract them from the only One that can help them. I know that it's

difficult to see, and so He says, “You've got to spend something here.” When He says you have to spend something, it means that it's going to have to cost you something.

The Gospel of Luke makes reference to this specifically, in Luke 14, I think it is. He says, “You're going to need to calculate the cost.” You come to Christ; you need to calculate the cost. There's a cost involved. What's the cost? Well, Paul will write to Timothy, and He says, “I'm going to tell you that everybody who desires to live godly in Christ,” I want to tag that on, “in Christ,” because that's what the text actually reads. Sometimes, we just read the first part, “Those who desire to live Godly will suffer.” No, no. Finish it. “Those who desire to live godly in Christ will suffer.” Jesus will even tell His own disciples, “You need to take up your cross and follow Me.”

It's a strange phenomenon that we're willing to sacrifice and pull some money out of our own pocket to rebuild a city. But when it comes to rebuilding our character and more specifically, strengthening our faith, we just won't

let go of it. Our perception is, "We're ok. We've got this. We're fine."

It kind of reminds me in the Old Testament, and many of you know the story, we won't necessarily go back there, but it's recorded in 2 Chronicles 16 of Asa. And it tells us within this particular passage, that the Israelites (he's in Judah) were coming down from the north and they were attacking him. So, God says, "I'm here." But instead of turning to God, he goes, "I've got this." And you would think because he thinks he's got this, that he doesn't need to turn anybody else. Oh, he turned to somebody else. He turned to the Syrians, and he goes, "Look, I've got some money I'm going to give you in order for you to help me." And where do you think he got the money from? From the temple. He started taking the gold out of the temple and he tried to pay off this guy to help him. Instead of turning to God and leaving the gold in the temple, he uses the gold of the temple. I've oftentimes heard people, "I'm in dire straits with my finances. I need to stop giving at church." We don't know who you are, but God does, and the sad thing is that you're sending a signal to Him, "I

don't trust You.” And by virtue of you saying you've got this, the only thing you're doing is manipulating and going to other sources and trying to somehow make it happen and let the glory come to you. But it's not working. His point is that you're blind and you're wretched and you're poor because you're trying to do all these things and you have no faith, and there is no light from Laodicea because everybody's looking, and they go, “Ok, who do they worship?” And you want to know what the answer is? Them; their abilities; their pocket, their whatever. So, their resources is their god. But there's no light in that. I mean the world has that same dark thought and dark pursuit. He says, “You know what you're going to do, you're going to have to buy.”

Now, when you understand the word that He uses in the passage, from the way I understand it, and if you go back there, in Revelation 3, it says,

(Revelation 3:18) “I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire...”

Once again, Peter will use the same phrase, “The testing of your faith, refined by fire.” That's a testing of your

faith, because it's really the faith that you need. It's the faith that we proclaim. We believe God loves you. How much does He love you? He'll take care of me. He will supply all of your needs according to His riches in glory. Oh, many of us, like Asa say, "I've got this." The same thing was true with Ahaz also. Although, Ahaz was being attacked by Syria, and then instead of turning to God, he turns to Assyria, and he does the very same thing. He starts pulling the gold out of the temple and tries to buy off the enemy. That's man trying to protect himself. But the signal that must send when the church does it; let me put another way, the signal that must send when you do it, because you're the church, right? So, in the community, when they see you saying, "I've got this," and you're not putting your trust in God, you're not turning to God for your problems or your issues, and you're not saying, "God used this even in my life." He uses the fire, doesn't He? Kind of that testing by fire? Ok. So, here's what it looks like, and really a kind of a question that we need to pose to ourselves, how much would we pay for a closer relationship with God? How much would you pay? It's an interesting question, isn't it? So, Paul would say,

“I'm willing to spend and be expended for your souls.” And in Ephesians 3, he will even say, “I'm in prison for you right now.” That's quite a payment when you think about it.

When you come to the Book of Galatians, he turns to the people in Galatia, and he says, “You know what, somewhere my eyes got messed up, and it was while I was passing through you, and you begin to minister to me.” His statement is in Galatians, “It was for this reason that I had this.” Would you have a physical malady so that you could trust God to use you through that? Would you pay for that? “God give me a problem, so that I can minister better.” In a way, Paul says this to the Corinthians, that his weakness, well, he started off praying, “Get rid of this thing.” God says, “No, because through that weakness My strength is going to be made known.” So, in a way, it was an interesting trade off, wasn't it? The strength of his physical well-being was a payment, and that payment was so that he could minister in such a way that he wouldn't be boasting. There are things that get in the way, things like “I can do it myself,”

things that I'm really good at, things that I have a lot of ability in doing. "So, get out of the way God, let me just take care of this for You." And God says, "Ok. How about buying pain, so that it humbles you?" And you say, "Ok, I can't do anything." And God goes, "Now, I can use you. It's the power of God that's used in those difficult times, and He begins to reveal to these people that are really in great arrogance, declaring to themselves, "I don't need God. I just don't need Him."

The way that it ends is just a great passage because it says,

(Revelation 3:19) "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline..."

In other words, "You're going to go through difficult times because I'm not going to let you keep thinking this way."

"... therefore be zealous..."

He knows what He's talking about because they were very zealous to rebuild the city. Be zealous to build the body of Christ. Come to God and say, "Whatever it takes, I'm willing to sacrifice. I'm willing to give, that You might be

glorified.” Suffer the extremities of discomfort, so that maybe You can minister to somebody. Have you ever thought that maybe the difficulties in your life were actually for a reason, instead of you just sitting there going, “Get me out. Get me out. Get me out.” Instead of just saying that, how about going, “Ok. Lord, what are You doing? Because I know that You're sovereign in everything that's going on. I know I'm Your child. There's nothing that You're going to do that's bad for me. What would You have me do?” Could you imagine Jesus on the cross, “Get Me out. Get Me out.” He was dying for you. One of the greatest works that ever happened. You say, “But He looks so weak.” The power of God was shining, because it says that He trusted His Father even to death. He kept entrusting Himself to the faithful Creator in doing what is right. Are we thinking that way? The church isn't thinking that way. The church is thinking wrong. We're proclaiming faith in Christ alone, but how many times are we saying, “I've got this”?

In verse 20, to help you understand this a little bit better, and I don't want to be misunderstood in this, but the text

in the context is revealing that Jesus is doing a business deal. He's knocking on the door, and He says, "I want to have a business meeting with you." Now, I know that on the surface that sounds like there's not a personal thing, and it's not true. There's a personal thing and He wants to have fellowship, but He's talking to businesspeople. He just got finished telling them, "You need to buy something." He now comes to the door and the best picture I can give you is a phrase that we oftentimes use, "opportunity is knocking." The Laodiceans would never miss an opportunity to gain fame, to gain fortune, to gain success, to gain anything in their life. They wouldn't overlook an opportunity. Jesus goes, "Have I got a deal for you, but you've got to let Me in for you to understand just how great, how wonderful this is; we're going to have to sit down." Because when He talks about the fellowship, "We're going to have to sit down and we're going to have to come in agreement. We're going to dine together, and in dining together, we come to an agreement of things, what really is valuable and what isn't. But you've got to let Me in. You've got to believe that I'm the source that brings the success in your life. Because if you're sitting

there and you're saying, 'I got this, I got this, I got this.' You'll never open the door. You'll never see me as a source."

(Revelation 3:20) "Behold, I stand at the door..."

I love the fact that it's in the present participle continual because the picture is "I'm not going to stop knocking."

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock..."

What a great picture that is of the tenacity of Christ and His love for us, and the fact that He's saying, "I'm just not going to let you miss out on this." That's why He says, "Who the Lord loves He disciplines. I'm going to discipline. I'm not going to let you get away with this. I'm not going to let you miss this opportunity to actually invest in the greatest riches of all time, the wealth of knowing Me, the wealth of trusting Me, the wealth of proclaiming Me to other people, so that hey, you can be with Me in business. We can heal other people's eyes. We can help them see too." What a wonderful thing that is. But you and I have to be confident that it's only God, and sometimes that means that you and I are going to have to suffer. But hey, it's worth it. Isn't it? I mean, Paul said if we suffer just for

a little while, it's not to be compared with the joy and the glory to follow. It's not to be compared.

(Revelation 3:20) “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice...”

I like the fact that He puts in just the sound and the tone. You hear some people knocking on the door, “Let me in.” “I'm not letting you in.” You hear Jesus, “Come on now. You know what I have for you is wonderful.” And I can hear the tone of His voice. Can you hear? “My sheep hear My voice.” You can hear the tone, and it just beckons you because you know He's going to do what He's going to do because He loves you. “You hear My voice, you open the door, and I'm going to come in. We're going to have fellowship. At this point, the sad thing is virtually Christ has been asked to leave, but He's coming back. I mean, it is a church. But the moment that they said, “We got this,” is the moment they put Him out.

(Revelation 3:20) “I will come in to him and will dine with him...”

“I'll take possession and share an intimate relationship with him.”

“... and he with Me.

(Revelation 3:21) ‘He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne...’

Overcome what? Overcome thinking that you've got this; overcome the confidence in yourself; maybe in the money that you have, maybe in the ability that you have, maybe in the things that you can do or produce. You've got to overcome that. Jesus said, “I overcame it.” Jesus overcame? Yeah. Matthew 4. Look with me. I'll show you a great passage. Remember, Jesus fasted 40 days, 40 nights?

(Matthew 4:3) “And the tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.””

“Do it Yourself.” “No, I'm going to trust in My Father. I'm going to trust Him.”

See, all these are allurements to do it yourself. But when you do it yourself, you disconnect yourself from the relationship of God. Yeah, today you could actually probably go buy something at the grocery store without

acknowledging that God was the One, without acknowledging His grace to you. Yeah, you could probably still eat, but He's outside and you've lost the most valuable thing that you could ever have, and that's a relationship with God. You've lost the most valuable thing that you could ever possess. It was all because you said, "I've got this."

The devil takes Him to the holy city, "I'll give you this." And finally, when you come to the end of the passage,

(Matthew 4:8) "Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory;

(Matthew 4:9) and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me."

(Matthew 4:10) Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'"

He overcame.

If you look with me in Hebrews 11, I love the way that it's put here, in particular when it's dealing with Moses.

It says this,

(Hebrews 11:24) “By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter,

(Hebrews 11:25) choosing rather to endure ill-treatment...”

That's paying something. You're paying the price for your decision.

“choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,

(Hebrews 11:26) considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.”

He could see something that no one else could see. His eyes weren't blind. We look at things not seen, they look at the things that are seen, and boy, have they lost out.

(Revelation 2:21) “He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

(Revelation 3:22) 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.''''

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today and we come as a church that in our own personal strength, we find ourselves bankrupt and destitute. We boast of great things and say we rebuild and help but we didn't refresh anybody. We didn't bring any healing to anybody. The fact of the matter is that the only thing we brought was shame to Your name, and it was all because we thought we got this. Father, we realize that the church is not about us getting it. It is about us believing that You have it and about trusting in You, the Faithful and True. The One who is a source of all creation. We praise God from whom all blessings flow and we believe that at times it is very necessary for us to suffer loss that we might gain that

which is more valuable. We realize that the things that we perceive to be our glory are the very things that are keeping us back from Your glory. So, Lord, we submit to You today, and as Your church. Let Your light shine in us.