

SERMON SCRIPTS

SERMONS BY MINISTERS OF THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

THE CHURCHES OF REVELATION

DR . HOEH, 1982

[S82-4]

I WOULD LIKE TO TURN TO A FAMILIAR AREA OF REVELATION TODAY AND DISCUSS SOME MATTERS THAT PERHAPS WE OFTEN TAKE FOR GRANTED WITHOUT FULLY REALIZING THE IMPLICATIONS.

WE HAVE RETURNED FROM THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES ESPECIALLY REJUVENATED AND HAPPY. SOME OF THE TRIALS WHICH WE HAVE HAD ARE NO LONGER HERE. BUT THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT TRIALS AND CONTROVERSIES MAY NOT ARISE AGAIN.

WE NEED TO REALIZE THERE ARE THINGS WRITTEN IN CHAPTERS TWO AND THREE OF REVELATION THAT PERTAIN EQUALLY TO US, THAT UNDERLIE MANY OF THE PROBLEMS THAT WE HAVE HAD. AND WE PERHAPS SHOULD HAVE RECOGNIZED THEM AND SOLVED THEM MUCH EARLIER THAN WE DID.

THIS IS THE CHURCH TO WHOM THE DOORS WERE OPENED, THE CHURCH TO WHOM THE KEY OF DAVID WAS GIVEN, THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE THRONE OF DAVID AND THEREFORE WHERE THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL IS, THE GOD WHO TELLS THIS CHURCH TO HOLD FAST, IS THE ONE WHO SAYS, I WILL KEEP YOU FROM THE HOUR OF TRIAL COMING ON THE WHOLE WORLD TO TRY THOSE WHO DWELL UPON THE EARTH. HE'S THE ONE WHO ALSO SAID, "HE WHO HAS AN EAR LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAYS TO THE CHURCHES [PLURAL]."

THEREFORE, WE SHOULD NOTE, THAT ALTHOUGH WE MAY BE CHARACTERIZED BY THE MESSAGE GIVEN TO THE CONGREGATION OF PHILADELPHIA -- DESCRIBED AS HAVING LITTLE POWER BUT HAVE KEPT HIS WORD, HAVE NOT DENIED HIS NAME, HAVE KEPT HIS WORD OF PATIENT ENDURANCE -- THAT EVEN THOUGH THESE THINGS PERTAIN TO US, WE ARE ALSO TOLD THAT OTHER FACTORS DESCRIBED IN THE OTHER CHURCHES MUST NOT BE OVERLOOKED AND SHOULD BE TAKEN NOTE OF.

IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT ALL SEVEN CHURCHES THAT ARE DESCRIBED HERE EXISTED IN ONE TIME IN WESTERN ASIA MINOR, THE REGION WE CALL WESTERN TURKEY TODAY. THESE WERE CITIES IN THIS REGION, THE PRIMARY CITY WAS EPHESUS, THE COMMERCIAL CAPITAL OF THE PROVINCE. PERGAMOS WAS THE POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS CENTER. ALL THESE WERE HELD TOGETHER BY A MAJOR

ROAD SYSTEM, AND OUT FROM SOME OF THEM SPRANG OTHER CHURCHES NOT LISTED HERE.

IN THAT DAY, WHEN JOHN WROTE REVELATION, ALL OF THESE CHURCHES REPRESENTED DIFFERENT ASPECTS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHURCHES OF GOD THEN. IN OTHER WORDS, WHEN JOHN WRITES TO ALL SEVEN CHURCHES HERE, THROUGH THE MESSAGE THAT CAME FROM CHRIST, HE IS WRITING TO THE CHURCH OF THAT DAY AND TO THESE CONGREGATIONS BECAUSE THEY WERE UNIQUE IN TELLING A STORY.

THE STORY THEN IS THIS: JUST AS THAT STAGE OF THE CHURCH THEN HAD VARIOUS PROBLEMS, ACCOMPLISHMENTS, STRENGTHS, AND WEAKNESSES IN THE DIFFERENT CONGREGATIONS, SO THROUGH TIME THOSE PARTICULAR SEVEN WOULD REFLECT THE STATE OF AFFAIRS IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH, ALTHOUGH ALL PEOPLE AT ALL TIMES IN THE CHURCH SHOULD PAY ATTENTION TO THE CHARACTERISTIC OF THEIR LOCAL CONGREGATION, OF THE MINISTRY THAT WAS LEADING IT, AND OF THE STATE OF THE CHURCH AT THE TIME, WE SHOULD ALL PROFIT BY LOOKING AT EVERYTHING THAT IS SAID HERE.

SO MR. ARMSTRONG HAS RECOGNIZED FOR YEARS THAT THESE CHARACTERISTICS WILL BE FOUND PERHAPS ON THE ONE HAND IN AN INDIVIDUAL, OR IN THE LOCAL CONGREGATION, OR IN THE CHURCH AT LARGE. BUT THROUGH TIME, ONE CHARACTERISTIC WILL BECOME DOMINANT AND THEN ANOTHER, AND ANOTHER, AND ANOTHER, THE CHARACTERISTIC THAT HAS BEEN DOMINANT TODAY IS CERTAINLY WHAT IS DESCRIBED BEGINNING IN REVELATION 3:7. THE DOMINANT CHARACTERISTIC FOR MANY CENTURIES FROM THE COMING OF THE GOSPEL TO ENGLAND IN THE END OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY TO THE BEGINNING OF THE NINETEENTH -- A VERY, VERY LONG PERIOD OF TIME -- THE STATE OF THE CHURCH WAS A CHURCH THAT WAS VERY FEEBLE. PRIOR TO THAT TIME IT WAS VERY STRONG.

THE LATTER WORKS OF THE PREVIOUS CHURCH IN THE ALPS OF SWITZERLAND, FRANCE, AND ITALY, WERE GREATER EVEN THAN ITS FIRST WORKS. THEN, OF COURSE, YOU GO BACK TO A STATE OF AFFAIRS IN ASIA MINOR WITH PERGAMOS WHEN THE CHURCH WAS MAINLY AMONG THE ARMENIANS, THEN IT WAS IN THE GREEK WORLD IN THE TWO STAGES FROM THE VERY BEGINNING THE APOSTOLIC ERA AND THEN OF COURSE, LATER THE TIME OF THE LATER ROMAN EMPIRE THROUGH TO THE BYZANTINE REALM.

TODAY I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE A SPECIAL VIEW, LOOKING AT OURSELVES AND WHAT HAS HAPPENED, AND WHAT CAN HAPPEN FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF WHAT IT SAYS HERE. WE SHOULD, IF WE HAVE AN EAR, LISTEN TO WHAT THE SPIRIT SAYS TO ALL THE CHURCHES. MAYBE SOME OF OUR PROBLEMS THAT WE HAD, AROSE FROM NOT LISTENING; AND MAYBE SOME PROBLEMS THAT WE NOW HAVE AND SHALL HAVE, ARISE FROM NOT LISTENING.

TO THE FIRST CONGREGATION ON THIS MAIL ROUTE, THE CITY OF EPHEBUS, GOD SAYS OF THE CHURCH AND OF ITS LEADERSHIP, (REVELATION 2:2, RSV), "I KNOW YOUR WORKS, AND TOIL, AND PATIENT ENDURANCE. THAT YOU CANNOT BEAR EVIL MEN BUT HAVE TESTED THOSE WHO [FALSELY] CALL THEMSELVES APOSTLES BUT ARE NOT, AND FOUND THEM TO BE FALSE."

HERE IS A CHURCH -- AS MANY CHURCHES OF GOD MAY BE FOUND TO BE -- THAT ENDURE MANY THINGS, HOLD LOYALLY TO THOSE WHOM GOD HAS CALLED, RECOGNIZE THOSE WHO HAVE EVIL MOTIVES, AND WILL EXPEL SUCH WHEN NECESSARY FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE CONGREGATION. IT SAYS THERE, "TESTED THOSE WHO CALL THEMSELVES APOSTLES, BUT ARE NOT."

I WANT TO INTRODUCE THE THOUGHT OF APOSTLES HERE JUST FOR THE MOMENT, THERE WAS AN IDEA CIRCULATING THAT SAYS AT NO TIME SHOULD THERE BE ONLY ONE APOSTLE, SINCE JESUS CALLED TWELVE, THERE MUST ALWAYS BE MORE THAN ONE, SO MR. HERBERT ARMSTRONG CAN'T BE THE ONLY ONE.

MAY I STATE TO YOU THAT IF YOU EXAMINE CHURCH HISTORY YOU WILL FIND TIMES, BRETHERN, WHERE NOT ONLY WERE THERE NO APOSTLES, NOT EVEN ONE, THERE WEREN'T EVEN EVANGELISTS IN THAT SENSE, THERE WERE TIMES WHEN THE CHURCH HAD LITTLE MORE THAN JUST ELDERS. WHAT WE DO RECOGNIZE IS THAT THE DECISION TO SEND SOMEONE AS AN APOSTLE VARIES WITH CHRIST. HE IS THE ONE WHO MAKES THE DECISION; WE DO NOT, HE MAY REVEAL TO AN APOSTLE THAT THERE SHOULD BE OTHERS. I FIND NO WHERE IN CHURCH HISTORY THE INDICATION THAT EVEN THOSE WHO WERE EVANGELISTS WERE RAISED NECESSARILY TO THE LEVEL OF APOSTLE.

TIMOTHY, TO MY KNOWLEDGE, WAS NEVER OTHER THAN AN EVANGELIST. HE WAS NOT CALLED TO DO THE THINGS THAT THE APOSTLES WERE. THERE WERE LATER MEN WHO MOST CERTAINLY HAD THAT ROLE IN ASIA MINOR WHO REACHED KINGS AND PRINCES. AND OTHERS IN THE AREA OF THE ALPS IN THE MIDDLE AGES DID THE SAME. THERE WAS A MAN WHO CERTAINLY PLAYED THE ROLE OF AN APOSTLE -- THAT MR. ARMSTRONG SO RECOGNIZED HIM -- IN THE CHURCHES OF GOD SEVENTH DAY FROM THE TIME JUST BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR TO THE MIDDLE OF THE EARLIER YEARS OF THE DEPRESSION -- ANDREW DUGGAR, A MOST EDUCATED MAN. MR. ARMSTRONG RECOGNIZED THAT INDEED THAT WAS HIS REAL ROLE IN THE CHURCH.

HE WAS A MAN THAT PRESENTED TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES THE RIGHTS OF THE CHURCH TO BE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS DURING THAT FIRST WORLD WAR. THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES KNEW OF THE CHURCHES OF GOD FROM THE LAST CENTURY. IN THE CIVIL WAR OF THE UNITED STATES THE CHURCHES OF GOD DID NOT PARTICIPATE.

DURING THE KOREAN WAR, I APPEARED BEFORE A JUDGE IN TERMS OF MY RESPONSIBILITY AS A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR, AND HE HAD QUERIES. NOT UNTIL I EXPLAINED TO HIM THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VOTING AND GOING TO WAR, AND NOT VOTING AND NOT GOING TO WAR WAS IT CLEAR TO HIM WHY WE TOOK THE STAND THAT WE DID. AS HE SAID VERY PLAINLY, IT IS CLEAR WHEN YOU ARE WILLING TO RELINQUISH YOUR RIGHT TO VOTE, AND HOLD THAT YOUR COUNTRY IS A HEAVENLY ONE TO COME, THAT WE WOULD GRANT AND RECOGNIZE THE RIGHT ALSO TO BE A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR. TO DECIDE TO VOTE AND PARTICIPATE IN YOUR COUNTRY'S POLITICS, TO HAVE A RIGHT TO DETERMINE ITS GOVERNMENT, DEMANDS THAT YOU ALSO HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO DEFEND IT.

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTISTS PARTICIPATE TO SOME EXTENT IN POLITICAL AFFAIRS AND DO PARTICIPATE THEREFORE IN THE MEDICAL BRANCH OF THE MILITARY. THE CHURCHES OF GOD FROM OVER A HUNDRED YEARS AGO HAVE TAKEN THE OPPOSITE VIEW, THAT INDEED WE HAVE TO REPRESENT THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

SO HERE IS A CHURCH THAT HAD ALL THESE QUALITIES, AND IT HAD ENDURING PATIENCE. WITH ALL THE FINE QUALITIES YOU MIGHT THINK A CHURCH SHOULD HAVE THAT WORKS AND TOILS, AND ENDURES PATIENTLY, AND HASN'T GROWN WEARY, IT COULD NEVER HAVE ABANDONED THE LOVE THAT IT HAD AT FIRST. BUT IT IS SAID VERY PLAINLY HERE THAT HOWEVER MUCH A CONGREGATION OVER A PERIOD IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH MAY HAVE ACHIEVED THESE OTHER THINGS, IT IS STILL POSSIBLE FOR US TO ABANDON THE LOVE THAT WE FIRST HAD.

THE CONGREGATION OF EPHESUS HAD A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY. IT WAS TOLD THEY MUST ACQUIRE THE LOVE THAT PERTAINS TO THE LOVE OF GOD; THE LOVE THAT IS REFLECTED IN BROTHERLY LOVE. THIS TYPE OF LOVE IS SO IMPORTANT THAT EVEN THOUGH THEY DID THE REST OF THE WORK, BUT DID NOT HAVE LOVE, GOD SAID, I WILL COME AND REMOVE YOUR LAMPSTAND FROM ITS PLACE UNLESS YOU REPENT. IT ULTIMATELY MEANT THAT INSTEAD OF THOSE CONGREGATIONS AS A WHOLE CARRYING ON THE WORK, PEOPLE HAD TO LEAVE THOSE CONGREGATIONS AND A WHOLE NEW ORGANIZATION DEVELOPED. THOSE CONGREGATIONS THAT HAD NO LOVE WHEN THE LIGHT WENT OUT, BECAME ULTIMATELY THE BASIS OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH IN THE GREEK WORLD.

NOTE NOW ANOTHER CONGREGATION, THIS WAS THE SECOND ONE LISTED, THE CITY OF SMYRNA. "I KNOW YOUR WORKS, AND TRIBULATION, AND POVERTY. NOW HERE IS A CONGREGATION THAT HAD SERIOUS TROUBLE, AND WE HAVE SOME SERIOUS TROUBLE NOW.

THIS WAS A CHURCH THAT HAD POVERTY; IT WAS NOT RICH. THEY HERE OFTEN CALLED EBIONITES, A WORD THAT WAS APPLIED TO JEWISH CHRISTIANS, WHICH WAS A DEROGATORY WORD MEANING

THAT THEY WERE SPIRITUALLY POVERTY STRICKEN BECAUSE THEY KEPT CLOSE TO THOSE THINGS WHICH WE MIGHT CALL JEWISH PRACTICES, THE SABBATH BEING ONE OF THEM. JESUS SAID, "IN YOUR POVERTY YOU ARE RICH."

MR. ARMSTRONG SAID FOR YEARS, WHEN THEY CONDUCTED BIBLE STUDIES IN CHAIRS, ROCKING CHAIRS, AND ON BARE FLOORS IN THE DEPRESSION OF THE 1930'S IN OREGON, THAT THE MOST INTERESTING AND LIVELIEST STUDIES WERE THOSE WHERE THE PEOPLE HAD NOTHING. WHEN A CHURCH BECOMES MORE PROSPEROUS, LIKE WE WHO HAVE MORE AND MORE ACCESS TO THE MEDIA, WE SPEND MORE AND MORE TIME WITH TV AND READING THE PUBLICATIONS OF THIS WORLD INSTEAD OF SPENDING MORE TIME WITH GOD. WHEN THERE ARE MORE AND MORE EXTERNAL INFLUENCES THAT WE CAN AFFORD, WE ARE IN A SITUATION WHERE WE BECOME SPIRITUALLY POOR. WE WILL NOTICE THIS LATER, THAT IT IS WISER SOMETIMES TO LIVE, AT WHAT MAY BE CALLED THE POVERTY LEVEL AND TO BE SPIRITUALLY RICH.

GOD SAYS, I KNOW THE TRIBULATION YOU'RE GOING THROUGH, THE POVERTY YOU HAVE, THE SLANDER OF THOSE WHO CLAIM THEY ARE JEWS, SPIRITUAL JEWS, BUT WEREN'T KEEPING THE LAW, AND YOU WERE THE ONES WHO WERE.

I WILL NOT ADDRESS THE QUESTION HERE OF THE SYMBOLS OF THE NICOLAITANES, OR THE SYMBOLS OF THE SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN AT THIS POINT. THAT'S A HISTORIC MATTER. I'M ADDRESSING A QUESTION AT THIS POINT ONLY OF THE STATE OF AFFAIRS OF ALL THE CHURCHES. SO IT'S POSSIBLE FOR A CHURCH THAT IS PHYSICALLY POOR, AND SPIRITUALLY RICH, TO BE SLANDERED BY PEOPLE WHO SAY, WE'RE THE REAL JEWS, WE'RE THE REAL CHRISTIANS, BUT WHO ARE YOU?

THIS IS EVEN A CHURCH THAT HAD SUFFICIENT TRIBULATION THAT THE DEVIL WAS PLANNING TO CAST SOME OF THEM INTO PRISON. JESUS SAYS TO BE FAITHFUL TO DEATH AND, "I WILL GIVE YOU A CROWN OF LIFE."

TO THE CONGREGATION OF PERGAMUM IT SAYS, "YOU HOLD FAST MY NAME, YOU DO NOT DENY MY FAITH ..." EVEN IN A TIME OF PERSECUTION WHEN ANTIPAS WAS A WITNESS [THAT IS A MARTYR] CALLED TO TESTIFY, "I HAVE A FEW THINGS HOWEVER AGAINST YOU."

IT'S POSSIBLE ON OCCASION TO HAVE STRONG POINTS AND WEAK POINTS. THERE WERE THOSE WHO HELD TO THE TEACHING OF BALAAM. NOW BALAAM WAS THE PROPHET WHO TAUGHT KING BALAK OF MOAB HOW TO PUT A STUMBLING BLOCK BEFORE THE SONS OF ISRAEL BY GETTING THE MOABITE WOMEN TO DATE THE ISRAELITE MEN UNTIL THEY WANTED TO DO AND ENJOY THE THINGS THAT THE MOABITES HAD AS THEIR RELIGION.

NOW WE ARE NOT INVOLVED TODAY WITH SACRIFICE TO ROMAN IDOLS OR THE KIND OF IMMORALITY WHICH ASSOCIATED ITSELF WITH THOSE IDOLATROUS PRACTICES, BUT I DRAW ATTENTION TO THE VERY IMPORTANT STATEMENTS HERE. THERE ARE ALWAYS THOSE IN THE CHURCH TODAY WHO TRY TO COMPROMISE WITH THE WORLD JUST AS THESE WERE COMPROMISING WITH THE WORLD THAT THEN WAS. IT IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR MINISTERS NOT TO CREATE SITUATIONS WHERE PEOPLE ARE TEMPTED TO DO WHAT IS IMPROPER, WHAT IS SINFUL.

WE HAVE HAD UNFORTUNATELY, OUR OWN FORM OF IMMORALITY THAT IS PERHAPS MORE LIKELY BETTER ASSOCIATED WITH THE NICOLAITANES MENTIONED BOTH AT EPHESUS AND HERE AT THIS POINT.

NOW BALAAM WAS AN INTERESTING MAN IN THE SENSE THAT HE WAS THE KIND OF PERSON WHO ALWAYS WANTED TO GO AS FAR AS GOD WOULD ALLOW HIM. I THINK THIS IS A VERY IMPORTANT OBSERVATION. IF GOD SAYS, I DON'T WANT YOU TO DO THIS, THEN HE SAYS, WELL CAN'T I? BALAAM WAS THE KIND OF PERSON THAT WAS ALWAYS ASKING TO DO EVERYTHING THAT GOD WOULD ALLOW HIM TO DO. THAT IS, IS IT STILL POSSIBLE TO BE SAVED AND DO THIS OR THAT ON THE SABBATH? CAN I DO THIS OR THAT IN TERMS OF MORALITY AND STILL BE SAVED? THERE ARE STILL PEOPLE WHO ASK THOSE QUESTIONS! HOW FAR CAN YOU GO INTO SIN BEFORE GOD CATCHES UP WITH YOU? THAT WAS BALAAM'S VIEW, THE TEACHINGS OF THE NICOLAITANES CAN ONLY BE UNDERSTOOD IN TERMS OF THE FACT THAT CHURCH HISTORIANS HAVE ALWAYS VIEWED IT AS ESSENTIALLY IMMORALITY.

NOW WE ARE TOLD VERY CLEARLY THAT ONE CONGREGATION HATED THE WORKS OF THE NICOLAITANES, AND ANOTHER CONGREGATION HERE HAD SOME WHO HELD TO THOSE TEACHINGS. WE HAVE CONGREGATIONS WHERE IMMORALITY WOULD BE UNTHINKABLE, WHERE THE LEADERSHIP AND PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY IS AT THE LEVEL IT OUGHT TO BE. THIS WAS NOT THE CASE FOR YEARS IN SOME CONGREGATIONS. THERE HAVE BEEN FOR MANY YEARS THOSE WHO HELD THE TEACHINGS OF THE NICOLAITANES AND SEDUCED OTHERS.

"REPENT THEN. IF NOT I WILL COME TO YOU SOON AND WAR AGAINST THEM." THAT'S AN AWFUL STATEMENT WHICH IMPLIES A MILITARY VENTURE THAT GOD IS GOING TO ALLOW. SO IT IS POSSIBLE FOR THE CHURCH TODAY, IF IT LISTENS TO WHAT IS SAID, TO DISCOVER THAT SOME IN THE CHURCH HATE IMMORALITY AND OTHERS HAVE ALLOWED IT OR INDULGED IN IT. WE'RE TOLD AS THE PHILADELPHIA CHURCH TO LISTEN TO THE MESSAGE THAT GOD SAYS TO ALL OF THEM. WHEN GOD SAYS THAT SOME DON'T DO THIS AND SOME DO, THIS IS THEREFORE A PROPHECY THAT TELLS US THAT IN ANY STAGE OF THE CHURCH YOU'RE LIKELY TO FIND THIS PROBLEM. SOME WILL HOLD FIRMLY AND OTHERS DO NOT.

DROPPING DOWN TO THE CONGREGATION OF THYATIRA IT SAYS THAT HERE IS ONE THAT HAD LOVE AND FAITH AND SERVICE, AND PATIENT ENDURANCE AND IN SO DOING, ITS LATER WORKS WERE EVEN GREATER THAN THE FIRST. IT KEPT DOING MORE AND MORE AND THINKING OF NEW WAYS TO DO IT. YET, DESPITE THE FACT THAT THIS CHURCH HAD LOVE, AND FAITH, AND SERVICE, CERTAINLY IN TERMS OF TAKING CARE OF THEIR OWN, AND PATIENT ENDURANCE, AND CARRYING OUT THE WORK AS NO OTHER CONGREGATION DID UP TO THIS TIME, YET, GOD SAYS, "YOU TOLERATE THAT WOMAN JEZEBEL, WHO CALLS HERSELF A PROPHETESS." JEZEBEL BEGUILED HIS SERVANTS TO PRACTICE IMMORALITY, AND EAT FOOD SACRIFICED TO ANIMALS. WE HAVE HERE A SIMILAR PROMISE, THAT GOD WOULD DEAL WITH THIS PROBLEM.

IF I MAY BE PLAIN, THE PROBLEM OF IMMORALITY -- PORNEA -- HAS BEEN A MAJOR ROOT THAT DESTROYED THE SPIRITUAL STATE OF THOSE WHO ALLOW THIS SIN TO EXIST. THE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS DISCUSSED HERE AS YOU NOTE, ARE NOT DOCTRINAL PROBLEMS. DID YOU NOTICE THAT BRETHREN? THE BIG ISSUES HERE ARE NOT THE NATURE OF GOD, THE NATURE OF THE WORLD TOMORROW, THE DOCTRINE OF THIS OR THAT, OR SOMETHING ELSE. THE PRIMARY PROBLEMS THAT MUST BE FOCUSED ON PERTAIN TO A LOSS OF LOVE, TO TOLERATING IMMORALITY, AND PERTAIN TO COMPROMISING WITH THE WORLD'S PRACTICES.

IT SEEMS AS YOU LOOK AT THESE LETTERS, THAT SINCE THIS IS THE CHURCH, THAT THE ISSUE IS NOT THE DIFFERENCE IN DOCTRINES LIKE YOU MIGHT FIND WITH OTHER CONGREGATIONS, IT IS THE SPIRITUAL STATE OF MIND OR MORALITY THAT IS A FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE. SOMETIMES IT IS ATTITUDES.

"TO THE REST OF YOU IN THYATIRA WHO DO NOT HOLD THIS TEACHING, WHO HAVE NOT LEARNED WHAT SOME CALL THE DEEP THINGS OF SATAN, TO YOU I SAY, I DO NOT LAY ON YOU ANY OTHER BURDEN; ONLY HOLD FAST WHAT YOU HAVE TILL I COME." HE DOESN'T SAY HE'S COMING QUICKLY TO THAT CHURCH. ALL HE SAYS HERE IS THAT IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT WE AVOID WHAT MAY BE CALLED THE DEEP THINGS OF SATAN.

MR. ARMSTRONG HAD A LABEL FOR MANY OF THE THINGS THAT HAD BEEN OCCURRING HERE, THOSE THINGS OF SATAN HIMSELF, THAT REFLECT HIS STATE OF MIND AND HIS ATTITUDE. YOU KNOW THAT THE MORMANS IN UTAH HAD CERTAIN STANDARDS OF MORALITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE. THE QUESTION WAS, HOW COME MANY OF OURS DIDN'T? VERY SIMPLE: YOU DON'T ASK THEM TO BE, YOU DON'T SET THAT EXAMPLE, YOU DON'T DISCIPLINE, YOU WON'T HAVE IT. YOU SET THAT EXAMPLE, YOU DISCIPLINE, YOU INSTRUCT, AND YOU WILL HAVE IT, WHICH WE NOW DO HAVE.

SO WHEN GOD ADDRESSES OUR CHURCH TODAY, HE WARNS US NOT TO GET INVOLVED WITH SATAN. NOW THERE ARE MANY OTHER "DEEP THINGS OF SATAN". SOME ARE INTELLECTUAL, SOME ARE MORAL ISSUES. OFTEN THESE THINGS ARE THOUGHT TO BE DEEP THINGS OF GOD, BUT THE BIBLE DESCRIBES WHERE THEY REALLY COME FROM.

THEN SOMETIMES YOU CAN HAVE THE PROBLEM THE SARDIS CHURCH HAD AS YOUR PERSONAL PROBLEM OR THE STATE OF YOUR LOCAL CONGREGATION. "... YOU HAVE A NAME OF BEING ALIVE [YOU'RE CALLED THE CHURCH OF GOD; YOU'VE BEEN IN THE CHURCH FOR HOW MANY YEARS?], BUT YOU ARE [ACTUALLY, SPIRITUALLY] DEAD. [THERE'S NO REAL LIFE OR ACCOMPLISHMENT. YOU'RE TOLD TO,] AWAKE, AND STRENGTHEN THAT WHICH IS ON THE POINT OF DEATH [THAT DOESN'T IMPLY THERE'S MUCH LEFT.], FOR I HAVE NOT FOUND YOUR WORKS PERFECT IN THE SIGHT OF MY GOD."

HERE WAS A CONGREGATION THAT DIDN'T HAVE THIS KIND OF IMMORALITY, BUT WAS REMARKABLE BECAUSE IT REALLY WAS NOT DOING ITS PART IN THE WORK, AND ITS SPIRITUAL LIFE WAS ESSENTIALLY DEAD. FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN YOU DEAL WITH HUSBANDS OR WIVES WHO ARE ALCOHOLICS, THEY USUALLY NO LONGER PRAYED, OR WHO WOULD INADVERTENTLY PRAY, AND ARE ALWAYS SORRY FOR THE PROBLEM BUT STILL GO AHEAD AND CONTINUE IT.

HUSBANDS BEAT THEIR WIVES, THEY GET INTO ARGUMENTS WHICH LEAD TO BLOWS SO THAT EITHER THE POLICE OR THE MINISTER HAS TO BE CALLED -- AS IT USED TO BE SOMETIMES FROM 1-3 IN THE MORNING WHEN I USUALLY LIKE TO BE ASLEEP. I DON'T KNOW WHY PEOPLE ARE AWAKE ARGUING AT THAT TIME; I MEAN, IT'S NICER TO REST. BUT THESE THINGS HAVE HAPPENED. ANYBODY WHO ALLOWS THIS STATE OF MIND CAN ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS HAVING ALLOWED HIS SPIRITUAL LIFE TO COME TO A POINT OF DEATH.

I HAVE ATTENDED IN TIMES PAST, ONE OF THE CONGREGATIONS OF THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD AND I WOULD SAY THE CHURCH THERE WAS SO CLEARLY A PATTERN OF THIS, THAT IS WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO FIND ANY OTHER MORE SIMILAR. IT WAS JUST BASICALLY DEAD. NO REAL INTEREST IN DOING THE WORK, NO REAL UNDERSTANDING, NOT JUST LUKEWARM, BUT DEAD! I HOPE IT IS CHANGED. THERE WERE NEW MINISTERS WHO CAME, AND THE MAN THEN RESPONSIBLE HAS LONG SINCE THEN LEFT THE CHURCH.

THERE MAY BE EVEN IN SUCH A CONGREGATION SOME WHO "WALK IN WHITE" AND ARE WORTHY, SO YOU CAN HAVE IN ANY CONGREGATION MANY VARIATIONS. THERE ISN'T A SINGLE ONE OF THESE CONGREGATIONS THAT DOESN'T HAVE SOME STRONG POINT THAT WE HAVE THUS FAR NOTED. EVERYONE HAS A STRONG POINT EITHER AS INDIVIDUALS OR IN THE LEADERSHIP. SOME HAVE SERIOUS WEAKNESSES. SOME CONGREGATIONS BASICALLY HAVE A PROBLEM

AND IN OTHER CASES INDIVIDUALS IN IT HAVE A PROBLEM. WE HAVE TO NOTE THAT.

WE HAVE OUR CONGREGATIONS OF THE PHILADELPHIA ERA DESCRIBED HERE BASICALLY AS ONE OF LITTLE POWER. NOW THE WORD "POWER" HERE, IS THE SAME WORD THAT HAS THE SENSE OF "DYNAMIC", OR MAY BE EVEN USED FOR MIRACLES. THIS CHURCH HAS FEW MIRACLES THAT SEEM EXTERNALLY REMARKABLE. JOHN THE BAPTIST DID NOT DO MANY MIGHTY MIRACLES. THERE ARE CERTAIN TIMES THAT GOD CHOOSES THAT THIS NOT BE DONE.

NOW THERE IS ANOTHER CONGREGATION THAT WE OUGHT TO TAKE NOTE OF. TO THE CHURCH OF LAODICEA HE SAID, "YOU ARE NEITHER HOT NOR COLD ..." NOW I WOULD LIKE TO CLARIFY A POINT. IT DOESN'T MEAN THAT HOT IS GOOD AND COLD IS BAD. IT MEANS THAT HOT IS GOOD IN COLD WEATHER, AND COLD IS GOOD IN HOT WEATHER.

WHEN WE HAD VISITORS FROM TONGA IN JANUARY, IT WAS COLD AND THEY WANTED HOT WATER. WHEN I'M IN TONGA AND IT'S HOT, I LIKE COLD WATER. YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS LIKE WHEN YOU ASK FOR HOT WATER YOU GET WHAT IS LUKEWARM. OR WHEN YOU ASK FOR COLD WATER YOU GET WHAT IS LUKEWARM. YOU KNOW WHAT LUKEWARM TASTES LIKE? JESUS DID EXPRESS HIMSELF, HE SAID, I'M GOING TO SPEW YOU OUT OF MY MOUTH. YOU WANT EITHER THE HOT OR THE COLD, DEPENDING ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

NOW HOW DID THIS HAPPEN? WE'RE TOLD THAT THERE WAS A CHURCH THAT HAD POVERTY, BUT WERE SPIRITUALLY RICH. BUT HERE'S A CHURCH OF WHICH IT IS SAID, YOU SAY, I AM RICH AND HAVE PROSPERED AND NEED NOTHING. YOU CAN SAY IT PHYSICALLY, OR YOU CAN SAY IT SPIRITUALLY. MOST PEOPLE SAY IT SPIRITUALLY WHEN THEY ARE ALSO THAT WAY PHYSICALLY. NOW SINCE THIS CHURCH HAS INDEED PROSPERED, WE SHOULD TAKE SPECIAL NOTE OF THE PROBLEM. INEVITABLY OF COURSE, THE LAST STAGE OF THE CHURCH IS LAODICEA, AND LOGICALLY IN HISTORY WE SHOULD EXPECT THAT AN OUTGROWTH AND ULTIMATELY A SEPARATE CANDLESTICK, A SEPARATE GOVERNMENT IS THE OUTCOME OF THIS. NOW YOU SAY, I AM RICH AND HAVE PROSPERED AND NEED NOTHING, NOT KNOWING THAT IN REALITY, INWARDLY THERE IS WRETCHEDNESS, AND YOU'RE PITIABLE, POOR, BLIND, AND NAKED.

NOW THESE PEOPLE SAW THEMSELVES, OR THOUGHT OF THEMSELVES AS CLOTHED, SPIRITUALLY WITH WHITE GARMENTS, PHYSICALLY WITH WHATEVER THEY WERE WEARING, WHAT PROSPERITY COULD BUY. THEY WERE DOING SOME WORKS ALL RIGHT BUT IT WAS MEDIOCRE. IT IS THE BIGGEST TEST WHENEVER PROSPERITY HITS A NATION, A CHURCH, A GENERATION, A FAMILY; IT DOESN'T MATTER. THE PROBLEM IS WHEN YOU BECOME RICH, YOU THINK YOU HAVE PROSPERED AND NOW YOU DON'T PRAY FOR YOUR DAILY BREAD ANY MORE IN THE SAME WAY.

YOU KNOW, WHEN YOU ARE HUNGRY YOU PRAY FOR DAILY BREAD. THAT MEANS YOU REALLY PRAY BECAUSE YOU'RE BASICALLY HUNGRY THREE TIMES A DAY AND GOD GETS YOU PRAYING THREE TIMES A DAY. ONCE YOU GET YOUR SALARY CHECKS REGULARLY YOU DON'T HAVE TO PRAY SO OFTEN. AFTER ALL, THE REAL REASON MOST PEOPLE PRAY IS FOR THEIR STOMACH'S SAKE. LET US FACE THE FACT THAT YOU WOULD BE PRAYING MORE OFTEN IF YOU WERE HUNGRY MORE OFTEN; THIS IS REALITY!

THE RESULT OF THIS PROSPERITY, BRETHREN, THAT WE HAVE IN THE UNITED STATES AND MUCH OF THE WESTERN WORLD, AND IN THE CHURCH OF GOD, IS THAT IT HAS LEAD TO INDIVIDUALS WHO THINK OF THEMSELVES AS BEING RIGHTEOUS, CLOTHED ABOUT WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS, WHEN INWARDLY THERE IS A WRETCHEDNESS.

YOU KNOW WHEN YOU ARE WRETCHED. THIS MEANS IN A TERRIBLE STATE, EITHER MENTALLY, EMOTIONALLY, PHYSICALLY, FINANCIALLY, AND PITIABLE. SOMEBODY THAT HAS BEEN IN AN ACCIDENT OR WHO HAS BEEN A DRUNK, WHO IS REALLY PITIABLE. THIS IS THE STATE OF MIND WHERE YOU COULD PRACTICALLY SAY THE CHURCH IS DISEASED, THE FAMILY IS DISEASED. IT'S JUST PITIABLE TO SEE THE STATE, AND IT'S REALLY POOR. THERE ARE MANY THINGS SOMEONE IN THIS STATE DOESN'T SEE. THEY CAN'T SEE THEIR OWN STATE.

A MAN WHO LEFT THIS CHURCH SAYS HERBERT ARMSTRONG CLOSED WHAT WAS ONE OF THE MOST MARVELOUS AND WONDERFUL SMALL RELIGIOUS COLLEGES IN THE UNITED STATES. BUT HE COULD NOT SEE THE PITIABLE STATE TO WHICH PART OF THE STUDENT BODY AND THE ADMINISTRATION HAD COME. IT WAS WRETCHED AND PITIABLE AND BLIND TO ITS PROBLEM; SPIRITUALLY NAKED.

NOW IT'S IMPORTANT THAT INSTEAD OF BUYING GOLD, YOU BUY THE TRUE GOLD, WHAT'S REALLY WORTH IT. YOU KNOW THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH WHO ARE BUYING GOLD TODAY, BECAUSE IT REALLY INCREASES. NOW I HAVE NO OBJECTION TO GOLD, SOLOMON HAD IT, DAVID HAD IT. BUT OFTEN IT IS INDICATIVE OF THE FACT THAT WE TEND TO PUT OUR MONEY IN THESE PHYSICAL THINGS WHEREAS WE NEGLECT TO SEE THE SPIRITUAL STATE. WHAT WE SHOULD HAVE IS SPIRITUAL GOLD AND A WHITE GARMENT INSTEAD OF NO SPIRITUAL GARMENT AT ALL. WE NEED TO HAVE OUR EYES OPEN TO SEE. I'VE SHOWN YOU THAT ALL THESE PROBLEMS CAN AFFLICT GOD'S CHURCH. WHEN ANYBODY HAS BEEN OVERCOME BY PROSPERITY THERE IS THE NEED THAT HE BE CHASTENED, THAT THE PERSON BECOME ZEALOUS AND REPENT. NOW THE REAL WAY TO DESCRIBE THIS SAD STATE OF AFFAIRS IS ON THE FAMILY LEVEL. IT'S LEFT TO EACH INDIVIDUAL TO REPENT. AND THIS IS INTERESTING. JESUS SAID, I STAND AT THE DOOR AND KNOCK. IF ANYONE HEARS MY VOICE AND OPENS THE DOOR, I WILL COME IN TO HIM AND EAT WITH HIM. MUCH LIKE YOU WOULD INVITE SOMEONE INTO YOUR OWN HOME.

NOW THE IMPLICATION OF THIS IS THAT THE BULK OF THE PROBLEM HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH DOCTRINE. I CAN SAY IN LOOKING THROUGH THIS THAT THERE IS NOT A SINGLE CHURCH WHERE DOCTRINE WAS THE ISSUE. CAN YOU FIND ONE YET? ITS PRACTICE, MAYBE ADMINISTRATION, AND CERTAINLY MORALITY AND THE EMOTIONAL STATE, AND ATTITUDE OF THE CHURCH OF GOD HAS ALWAYS BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY THAT BASIC DOCTRINE THAT DISTINGUISHES IT FROM THE WORLD.

NOW THERE WAS ONE CHURCH THAT WAS VERY DEAD, AND EVEN NEGLECTED BASIC DOCTRINE AND WAS TOLD TO STRENGTHEN WHAT REMAINS. BUT APART FROM THAT QUESTION THE PROBLEMS ARE IN THE LEVEL OF THE FAMILY. THAT IS OF COURSE SINCE THAT'S THE LAST STAGE, IT'S THE LAST THING THAT WE HAVE TO BE AWARE OF, THE MOST LIKELY PROBLEM. SO I WOULD SAY, THOUGH WE HAVE PROMISES THAT ARE GIVEN TO THIS CHURCH, THE CHURCH OF PHILADELPHIA, WE SHOULD NOT NEGLECT THE FACT THAT JESUS COULD HAVE CRITICIZED THIS CHURCH AND IN FACT DID WHEN HE TELLS US THAT -- AS WE READ THE OTHER CHURCHES -- THESE ARE PROBLEMS. HE IMPLIES THAT SOME OF THOSE PROBLEMS ARE OURS TOO, EVEN THOUGH HE DIDN'T REPEAT HIMSELF EVERYTIME.

I HOPE THAT FROM THAT WE LEARN THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MEANING OF EVERY ONE OF THESE MESSAGES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES.

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