

What The Spirit Saith..

Part 2: Revelation 2b-3

Rock Hill Baptist Church
605 Rock Hill Road
Lexington, Tennessee 38351

Pastor David Buffaloe
731-845-6104
online at bibleteacher.org



FOCAL Read Together Revelation 3:6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

God's method has always been the local Church. This the reason that the **Spirit saith unto the churches** - plural - and not *unto the Church*. There are many who believe that their local Church is the only way unto God. According to my Bible, the Only Way to God is Jesus Christ. It is He Who said:

John 14:6 ... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Jesus Christ is **the Way unto the Father**. The local Church points to Jesus. It is **His Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18)**. Jesus Christ is the **manifest Truth of the Father**. When you look at Jesus you see what the Father thinks of sin and iniquity. See Him on yonder Cross. Hear His Words as He suffers the terror of our sin. **"Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34)**. If Jesus had not been willing to lovingly forgive us, even as He suffered and died for us, we would yet be dead in our sins. **"Truly I say unto you, today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43)**. The local Church directs its gaze to Jesus. He is our focus, our **Way unto Paradise**. **"I thirst" (John 19:28)**. He Who walked on water and calmed the sea had not even a few drops of clean water to quench His thirst. Those who leave this life without Christ rightfully enter a place where thirst is

a reality. Why? Because *they rejected Him Who suffered thirst for them*. **"My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34)**. He was forsaken, bruised and bleeding, as your and my sins were poured out on Him and judged. There is no parent among us who will not hasten to bandage the smallest cut on his or her child's finger. Yet God the Father turned from His Only Begotten Son in His time of greatest suffering. He did that for you and for I. He did that so that might be saved. **"It is finished" (John 19:30)**. Nothing is left to be paid. Christ paid it all.

**Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe.
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.¹**

The local Church is an assembly of Blood bought, God cherished believers. Eternal God shed His Blood for His Church (**Acts 20:28**). His Church is the means by which He spreads the Good News of the Gospel, that **In Him is Life, and the Life is the light of men (John 1:4)**.

When someone comes to me and says "You must be a member of this Church or that Church in order to be saved" my response is always "show me". A person may say that his local Church is the only Way to God, but you'll not find that in the Holy Scripture. The Bible teaches that Christians *are quite naturally members* of His Body (**Ephesians 5:30**). If you have been saved the Lord expects you to come forward, be baptized, and *unite* with the local Church. In the early Church we read

"the Lord added to the church daily" (Acts 2:47). The Lord adds to His local Church. If you're saved by faith in Him, you are called to His local Church. Priests work together for their Lord. Each of you who are saved are believer-priests, working with One Great High Priest, Jesus Christ our Lord. You work together for His glory. You work together that others might be saved. You work together as a **Light unto the World, the Great City of God (Matthew 5:14)** bringing light to this dark world. Your calling is to be His Ambassadors, His people, His nation, His servants, His sons.

We live to glorify God. He deserves our glory. If you have been saved **the Spirit speaks to you as He speaks to the local Church**. May God touch your hearts with this Word.

Thyatira: The Church Must Never Compromise With The World

FOCAL Revelation 2:18-20 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write... {19} I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. {20} Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

It has been said that the promises of God are not a couch to lay on, but a suit of armor to wear into

¹ "Jesus Paid It All": Words: Elvina M. Hall, 1865; Music: John T. Grape

battle.

We who are Christ's are called to be light in the midst of darkness. The Lord says of His Church:

1 Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:

You are chosen of God, His priests by faith, a **holy and separate nation**. You are a body of Ambassadors.

You have been **called out of darkness and into the Light of salvation** just as I have. We are therefore obligated to Him Who saved us and loved us. What we do is not of our opinion, but of His opinion. It is not about us, but it is about Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

The local Church of Thyatira was a working Church. Jesus says to them in verse 19:

FOCAL Revelation 2:19 I know thy works², and

2 G2041, ἔργον, *ergon*, *er'-gon*, From ἐργω *ergō* (a primary but obsolete word; to *work*); *toil* (as an effort or occupation); by implication an *act*: - deed, doing, labour, work.

charity, and service³, and faith, and thy patience⁴, and thy works²; and the last to be more than the first.

Notice that Jesus commends this local Church on their **works (ergon - “production”)** twice, then goes on to talk about their **love**, their **ministry (service work)**, their **faith**, and their **endurance under trial**. This Church was in missions. They were loving one another, and loving the Lord. They were working in their local community, trying to reach people for Christ. They worked so much that Jesus said **the last is more than the first**. The Lord is saying, in effect, **“You started well, and you've really grown in your ministry.”**

What was wrong with Thyatira?

The Church was experiencing a loss of identity. They began to look the other way at the sinful practices of their day, and began to allow these practices in their local Church. Our Lord Jesus Christ came to this earth to *save the sinner from his sin* – not to save the sinner *in* his sin. The day that Jesus met **Zacchaeus** – a man whose god was mammon – this man was saved by grace. When he was saved he said:

3 G1248, διακονία, *diakonia*, *dee-ak-on-ee'-ah*, From G1249; *attendance* (as a servant, etc.); figuratively (eleemosynary) *aid*, (official) *service* (especially of the Christian teacher, or technically of the *diaconate*): - (ad-) minister (-ing, -tration, -try), office, relief, service (-ing).

4 G5281, ὑπομονή, *hupomonē*, *hoop-om-on-ay'*, From G5278; cheerful (or hopeful) *endurance*, *constancy*: - enduring, patience, patient continuance (waiting).

Luke 19:8 ... **Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore [him] fourfold.**

To which Jesus responded:

Luke 19:9-10 ... **This day is salvation come to this house ... {10} For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.**

Those who are saved by Grace turn *from* sin – they do not wallow in it. The person saved from certain death by tornado or hurricane does not chase the storm!

That person turns from the evil and does the good. Once you meet Jesus your life is changed. You are no longer a dead thing, but you are alive because **Christ lives in you**. Just like He told the man crippled from birth:

John 5:14 ... **Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.**

If you have been saved He tells you the same thing. **Go, and sin no more**. Just like He told the woman taken in adultery:

John 8:11 ... **Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.**

We who belong to Him “**Go and sin no more**”. The Christian way of life properly taught is that Christ saved us from our sins. The truth of the Scripture is that:

Galatians 2:20 **I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.**

Christ **lives in me**. I love Him. I am crucified with Him. The Spirit says to us all who are saved:

Galatians 5:24-25 **And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. {25} If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.**

Do I as an “Ambassador for Christ” have the right to make policy for God? Why or why not?

The local Church of Thyatira stopped **walking in the Spirit**. They started by looking the other way at sin, at *winking* at sin. Whole congregations have followed the direction of Thyatira in our day. Local Churches condone illicit sexual practices and every evil work.

They slap a brand on it and call it “open door policy”, but Beloved, we have no right to open a door that has not been opened first by Jesus. Jesus said to the local Church of Thyatira:

FOCAL Revelation 2:20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because **thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.**

The local Church was allowing sinful practices in its midst. Jesus said “**you are allowing this by allowing this woman Jezebel to teach the wrong**”. Jezebel led ancient Israel into worship of the false god Baal. This Jezebel was leading Christ's servants into **acts of fornication and idolatry.**

Beloved, we have no control over what goes on in the world around us, but we do control what goes on in our midst. The local Church at Corinth was rebuked by the Lord because they allowed a young man to openly commit sexually immoral acts with his stepmother (**1 Corinthians 5:1-5**). And they were “**puffed up**” or proud over this thing.

Never forget where you came from, nor Who you belong to. Never forget:

Ephesians 5:8-10 For **you were once darkness,**

but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light-- {9} for the fruit of the light results in all goodness, righteousness, and truth-- {10} discerning what is pleasing to the Lord.^{HCSV}

Your works, your rituals, the things you do are *always* done for God. We have no right to modify the Gospel.

The Gospel has been and will always be “**repent, turn from your wickedness and turn to God. Believe that Jesus Christ bore the burden of your sins. Call upon Him, trust in Him, and you shall be saved!**”

What does the Spirit saith unto the Church? He says:

FOCAL Revelation 2:25 But **that which ye have already hold fast till I come.**

Hold on to the old ways, the old truths, the old paths. “**Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set**”. (**Proverbs 22:28**) The local Church is a living building. The Church is not a structure of brick and wood, it is a structure built by God. It is:

Ephesians 2:20-22 ... **built upon the**

foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; (21) In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: (22) In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.

You are God's House. You are God's garden (1 **Corinthians 3:9**). Do not allow the weeds and thorns of sin to grow in your midst.

Sardis and Laodicea: Avoiding Nominal and Loveless Christianity

These two local Churches represent a cold, loveless faith. The Lord said to Sardis:

FOCAL Revelation 3:1 ... **that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead⁵.**

Jesus said “you are a corpse, lifeless, without animation”. To the local Church of Laodicea Jesus said:

FOCAL Revelation 3:15-16 I know thy works⁶, that

5 G3498, νεκρός, nekros, nek-ros', From an apparently primary word νέκυσ nekus (a corpse); dead (literally or figuratively; also as noun): - dead.

6 Perfect Active Indicative of G1492, εἶδω, eidō, i'-do, A primary verb; used only in certain past tenses, the others being borrowed from the

thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. {16} So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

The local Church of Sardis was a corpse, whereas the local Church of Laodicea had the distinction of making Jesus sick to His stomach.

Jesus uses the **Perfect Active Indicative** of the Greek verb “to know”. Literally translated this word would read “**I have known and continue to know your works**”. Jesus was aware of their ambiguous nominal Christianity – and He was not please.

Neither of these local Churches were a blessing to the Lord Who saved them. The Christian is designed by God to be an overcomer. We are told:

1 John 5:4-5 For {whosoever} is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, [even] our faith. {5} Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

We only bless our Lord when we live our lives as

equivalent, G3700 and G3708; properly to see (literally or figuratively); by implication (in the perfect only) to know: - be aware, behold, X can (+ not tell), consider, (have) known (-ledge), look (on), perceive, see, be sure, tell, understand, wist, wot. Compare G3700.

overcomers.

Children of God – truly saved – will *be* overcomers.
Jesus told the local Church at Ephesus:

FOCAL Revelation 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; **To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.**

and to the local Church of Smyrna:

FOCAL Revelation 2:11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; **He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.**

The overcoming life is not *nominal* nor *apathetic* to the things of God. There's power in the Blood of Christ.

There's power in Almighty God. There's power in the Christian Way of Life. There's is power – and enough to spare – such power that Jesus expects us to overcome whatever may come!

ILLUSTRATE My Brother Jimmy Minor gave me permission to use this illustration. He said that when he

was a young man there was a gentleman who always beat everyone else to Church. No matter what time it was this man was the first one in the assembly of the Saints. Jimmy's mom asked the gentleman one day how he was able to get to Church first all the time. She said that it always took her some time to get ready. This gentleman responded, “I stays ready so I don't have to waste no time getting ready”.

The Christian is a person who should *stay ready*. We are not merely to occupy a space like the *local Corpse of Sardis*. The Lord left you on this earth to serve Him. When you cease to do so, He will call you home. We who are saved *never* want to be spewed out of Christ's mouth. We want to serve Him, to remember that we serve only Him, and to be passionate about the things He is passionate about. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. This is where our passion and our works need to lay. We need to be firmly missionary, ever reaching outward to the lost. Love must always compel all that we do.

Philadelphia: The Church of the Open Door

FOCAL Revelation 3:7-8 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, **he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; {8} I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my**

name.

I wanted to speak on this Church last, because this is the goal that I believe the local Church should be. This Church was greatly commended by Jesus. Unlike the other local Churches Jesus has *absolutely nothing bad to say about this Church*. Everything is positive. Everything is affirmation. Why is that? Look at the other local Churches mentioned to date.

Ephesus – whose name means “Desirable”. This Church left its Desire to serve the Lord for other things. The local Church of **Pergamos – whose name means “High Places”**, allowed idolatry. The local Church of **Thyatira – whose name means “Sacrifice of Labor”**, worked hard but forgot that God cannot condone sin. The local Church of **Sardis – whose name means “Prince of Joy”**, should have brought joy to the Lord. But they, along with **Laodicea – broke the Master's heart**. But what of **Philadelphia**? The name of this local Church literally means **“Brotherly Love”**. The Church loved its Lord and Savior Jesus. It loved the Father, and heeded the Spirit of God. Philadelphia practiced love among its members. It did not just say “I love you”, but it showed its love in the way each member lived his or her life. Philadelphia heard the promise of God, heard His command, then moved to act on it. **God is love (1 John 4:8, 16)**. When the local Church bonds together in Love the **God Who Is Eternally Love bonds with that Church**. Look what Jesus told them:

FOCAL Revelation 3:8 ... **I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open**

door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

God opens the door for this local Church and *no man*, no matter how powerful, whether it be Emperor, President, or Catholic Hierarchy, can shut the door. What a wonderful promise this is! The Church that loves is the Church most like Jesus, and *most liked* by Jesus. The Church that united under the banner of Christ – obeying His Word and living to serve Him – is an unstoppable force.

This is what God would have every local Church to be. Look at the early Church at Jerusalem. The Bible says:

Acts 1:14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

Unity and love one for another and for God permeated this Church. When did the Promised Comforter come? When did the Holy Spirit first indwell His Church? We read:

Acts 2:1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

Unified, in love with one another and with God. Following the filling of the Holy Spirit we read again:

Acts 2:46 And **they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple**, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

There was a **daily unity** in the local Church. It was a family that loved one another – as God intended it to be. When the Church **”lifted up their voice to God with one accord”** (Acts 4:24) the Lord did wonderful things, and brought many souls to salvation. The Lord loves a unified Church. He loves the loving Church. We must pursue unity and one accord in this Church – one accord with the Living Word, one accord with His written Word, and one accord with one another. To that local Church is given the promise of Christ of the **open door that no man can close, and of the closed door that no man can open**. What else does Jesus promise His faithful Church?

FOCAL Revelation 3:12 Him that overcometh will **I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, [which is] new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and [I will write upon him] my new name.**

Dr. Thomas Constable said⁷:

“Jesus Christ will identify with His faithful people. Since they have honored Him on earth He will acknowledge them in heaven (cf. 2:17; 14:1; 19:12). Writing one's name on something indicated ownership in John's day, as it does now. In the ancient world columns often bore the names of conquerors.”

God works with a unified and loving Church. He works within a Church that has **little strength** in itself but **great love and faith** toward God. Great works, wondrous strength, and little love and you have a Thyatira, a Laodicea, or a Ephesus. God works with the surrendered life and in the surrendered Church. the local Church at Philadelphia *received and loved the Word of God*. They adhered to His Word. Jesus said **“thou hast kept My Word”**. This means more than mere affirmation. It means the Church was obedient to the Lord Who saved them. If you obey Him, following His Word, God will open a door for you that no man can shut.

Jesus Stands At The Door Of The Local Church

FOCAL Revelation 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

Jesus stands at the door of every local Church knocking.

He calls us to **open the door** to Him, to focus on Him, to love Him wholeheartedly. I am praying for revival in America. Will you pray with me that this Church be a bright and shining light for Jesus in our community and beyond?

May God touch your hearts with His Word.



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