

## **Revelation 3 – Church in Philadelphia Part II**

Last week I spoke about the church in Philadelphia, but I did not complete the message. So I will continue with another point from there. So let's look at the verse in Revelation 3.

### **3) PROTECTION**

#### **Revelation 3:10-12**

*<sup>10</sup>Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from **the hour of testing**, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth. <sup>11</sup>I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. <sup>12</sup>He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.*

#### **The “hour of testing” is the Judgment of God**

This hour of testing was already happening when Jesus spoke to the Philadelphian church in the first century. God's anger is being revealed from one generation to another (Romans 1:18). So do not think that for all the evil things that men do, God is doing nothing. He cares for His Church and cares about what people in this world do, especially to His Church. Therefore, His judgment is already being revealed up to this day.

What is the hour of testing that Jesus would keep the church from? This period of trial and tribulation entails persecution of the Church (compare Rev7:14) accompanied by judgment from God (compare Rev2:22) that will come upon the Church's persecutors and the disobedient. It is worthy to note that “those who dwell upon the earth” refer to those who resist God and are the Church's enemies (6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8, 12, 14; 17:2, 8). The Church, which represents those who are faithful to God, will not be judged. They are the ones who experience God's protection during the trial and tribulation.

#### **“Hour of testing” does not refer to the great tribulation alone**

“To keep you from” is a significant construction. In some churches, they will tell you that the hour of testing is the great tribulation. According to them, the Church will not enter into the great tribulation but will be taken up or raptured. This verse is often used to support their claim. You might be familiar with TV series like Left Behind, which follows this position, the pre-tribulation rapture.

As I said, this hour of testing was already happening in the first century. If the great tribulation is in the future, this verse would be meaningless to the church in Philadelphia. Trials and tribulations have been occurring since the first century and will continue until our Lord Jesus comes.

#### **“Keep from” concerns protection, not an escape from trials**

#### **John 17:15**

*I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to **keep** them **from** the evil one.*

Jesus can see that the disciples will still battle against the evil one and will need to overcome him. Therefore he prays for Yahweh's protection. Jesus is not asking the Father to remove them from both the world and the evil one. We are not talking about escaping but spiritual protection, i.e., the strength to overcome. It is a reality that the evil one will continue to tempt and persecute us while we are still in this world, and we do need God's grace and power to sustain us.

**We need God's power to protect us from evil and become overcomers**

We see the same construction in James 1:27:

**James 1:27**

*Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to **keep** oneself unstained **from** the world. (ESV)*

We need God's power to keep us from sin in the world. James is not talking about staying in a remote monastery somewhere away from society. It isn't about isolation, which is a form of escaping from the world. We are talking about interacting with people in this world and yet not succumbing to sin. We need all of the power we can get from Him, who protects us from the power of the evil one and sin.

We can sum up the two verses with this statement: **we are in the realm of the evil one but not of the evil one, just as we are in the world but not of the world.** Why? Because of God's power that enables us to overcome. So our Lord Jesus is saying, "Because you kept my word and are faithful; therefore I will protect and deliver you **in or through** the hour of testing.

In Exodus, when Yahweh was exercising judgment on Egypt, the Israelites were spared from the various acts of judgment. So long as they continue to listen to Moses, they were remained untouched.

**Compromise with this world will put us under God's judgment**

However, if we compromise with the world as Jesus consistently warns in the letters to the seven churches, we will be subject to God's judgment. Now what this judgment is, we will see later. It has to do with the seals, trumpets, and woes. These prophecies are already in effect and continue.

We are already witnessing COVID and can see its devastating effects. Now, there are new strains of the virus which medical science has not been able to overcome. Could this be a direct judgment of God? Or is it an indirect judgment, i.e., nature's reaction to man's sins and abuses of the environment? God has ordained the natural world in such a way that when humanity commits sins, nature has a way of responding to these sins. We could say this is another form of judgment that is indirect. Anyway, we won't go into this. We just want to talk about God's direct judgments upon this world from which we are saved. But if we do not live faithfully, then we too become objects of those judgments.

**Walk in the Spirit faithfully, we will overcome all sufferings because of Christ's love**

### **Romans 8:35-37**

<sup>35</sup>Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup>As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." <sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

It is wonderful that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ! Not persecution nor suffering. Note that "famine, danger, and sword" are part of the judgments we will see in Revelation. If we are faithful and walk in the Spirit, then, of course, we will overcome all these. Why? Because of the love of Christ. We experience his love and the power of Yahweh from each day.

### **The faithful are not spared from suffering and death but from God's judgment**

#### **Revelation 1:18**

*And the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.*

We must realize that in Revelation, the saints experience suffering and even death (Rev 2:10). They are not spared from those, but they are spiritually protected from falling. So we still need to prepare for suffering. In the New Testament, suffering for Christ and the gospel is seen as a privilege (Phil3:10, Col1:24, 1Pet3:13,14). In Revelation, martyrdom is seen as a victory over the evil forces, not a defeat. See Rev 6:9-11, 7:14-17, 12:11.

Therefore, Paul is saying that whether it be suffering or the judgment of God, we need not fear because of the love of God with us. We know Jesus himself was not spared from suffering and death. Whatever the evil one threw at him, he overcame. He even overcame his death because the Father raised him from the dead. That is why he could say, "I died. Behold, I am alive forevermore."

### **Death is insignificant because of the resurrection of Jesus**

#### **Revelation 2:10**

*Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

The more you read the book of Revelation, the more you realize that death is not a very significant thing. Jesus sees death only as a gateway to something far more glorious because God has already overcome death. That means from Jesus' point of view, the spiritual life is much, much more important than death. Why? Because Yahweh has called us to live. So even physical death is a passing thing.

However, in this world, we are either trying to delay death or avoid death. That is one of the goals in life, it seems. So if you ask a person what his goal is in life? He will say, "I want to attain to, or achieve this and that," and so many other things. Of course, he wants to enjoy life too. But one of his primary goals is to avoid death. But I think that ultimately, an average person's goal is to avoid death as much as possible.

But that is not the emphasis in Revelation, as well as the New Testament. Death is not a big thing. For the saint or the person committed to Yahweh and Jesus, the moment you die, God's life takes over; we will experience the fullness of His life. Death, therefore, is swallowed up in victory (1Cor15:54,55).

There are certainly people in this world who are not afraid of death, even though they do not know God. In military history, there are lots of examples. Many war heroes are willing to die for their respective countries. I think it puts many Christians to shame. Even though these people have no future hope, yet they are willing to die. We Christians claim we have hope in Christ, yet we are afraid of and trying to escape death. We are no different from most unbelievers.

So it is good to read Revelation. The more you read it and try to understand it, the more we begin to understand our hypocrisy. We need to examine ourselves before God; we ask Him to search our hearts. That is why when I read these two verses, I began to see that death is actually quite insignificant in the light of Jesus' resurrection.

### **"Testing" translated as "temptation" in the singular is fatal**

As I said, if we compromise, we are in trouble. If we go back to Revelation 3:10, the word "testing" in Greek can be translated as "temptation." Now "temptation" here is singular. But if you check the occurrences of the word "temptation" in the singular in the New Testament, it seems that it is very dangerous in most references. The temptation can be a fatal one. If you fall into this kind of temptation, that's the end of your spiritual life. That's why Jesus said to his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Watch and pray that you do not enter into temptation (in singular)." This kind of temptation will cause you to fall away; that's how dangerous it is.

### **The unrighteous in this world will be under God's judgment**

#### **2 Peter 2:9**

*Then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly **from** trials (**temptation**) and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment.*

The ESV translates as "trials" when it is singular. This verse is significant for our purpose because it is clear that the unrighteous have been in a deep sinful state that the temptation (singular) wants to achieve. Hence, they will be under God's judgment. According to this verse, the process of judgment continues from one generation to another until the day of judgment.

### **"Lead us not into temptation" should be our daily prayer**

#### **Matthew 6:13**

*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil (or, the evil one).*

Jesus taught us to pray in this way because this temptation is deadly if we are not careful. We need to pray from our hearts so that we know how to be faithful to Yahweh and not be caught by this and come under God's judgment.

## **The temptation to want to be rich**

### **Matthew 6:24**

*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*

When you study Revelation, you will see how important Jesus' words are. Many Christians don't take this verse seriously. It is about time that we do! These words, "You cannot serve God and mammon," take quite some time to get this into our heads and our hearts too, but apparently, it didn't get through even during the first century. Therefore we see the problem of idolatry in the churches of Pergamum and Thyatira. Idolatry is a mortal sin in the Old Testament. It is a grave sin.

### **1 Timothy 6:9-10**

*<sup>9</sup>But those who desire to be rich fall into **temptation**, into a **snare**, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup>For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.*

One temptation that will absolutely destroy us is, as Paul says, the desire to be rich! Why do so many young people study hard to attain a particular profession? For many, the main reason is to become rich. If that's your thinking, remember what Paul says here. If we desire to be rich, we fall into temptation and a snare. A snare is a trap that puts you under the control of a hostile force. That is how you plunge or sink into ruin and destruction. You see, it is not the money itself. It is the desire or love for it that is the root of all kinds of evil. Paul says that some Christians are already doing this, so they have wandered away from their faith.

### **Is money controlling your life?**

Now, this is very real for our purpose. Here I am quoting from a book by Hawkins, O.S. The James Code (The Code Series p.193). And he says that "The real issue is not whether we have money, but whether our money has us!"

That is, money is the one that is controlling you, your decisions. It has a lot of influence on you. What you do and what your direction of life is is dictated by the love for money. Money is your boss. Hawkins is right. For many people, I think that money has them, partly because we think it solves many problems. So we are in a dilemma when we read what Paul has to say!

If you want to be kept from the hour of testing or trial, then listen to what Jesus says, just as the Israelites were listening to Moses and therefore were exempt from God's judgments. They did not experience the judgments; only the Egyptians did.

### **God will provide an escape**

### **1 Corinthians 10:12-14**

<sup>12</sup>Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. <sup>13</sup>No **temptation** has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation, he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

<sup>14</sup>Therefore, my beloved, **flee from idolatry.**

Here is the comfort! Verse 13 tells us that no temptation is unique but experienced by everyone. Then Paul says that Yahweh will provide an escape, not that we are all taken away from this world, but that we have the spiritual perception, wisdom, and strength to overcome temptation.

### **Mammon is the idol**

In verse 14, the temptation is about committing idolatry. When Jesus says, “You cannot serve God and mammon,” mammon is still the idol today.

### **Revelation 2:22**

*Behold, I will cast her upon a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds.*

This verse refers to Jezebel in the church in Thyatira. She was compromising with the values of society at that time, giving allowance for idolatry in the church. The bed of sickness is her death bed, and those who commit adultery with her are already experiencing the great tribulation, i.e., God’s judgment.

### **God’s judgment is an act of mercy to bring repentance**

#### **Revelation 16:8-9**

<sup>8</sup>The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire. <sup>9</sup>They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory.

Notice the last sentence, “they did not repent and give him glory.” God’s judgment was meant to bring them to repentance. It is an act of mercy to help the people realize their folly, but they refused to repent! They even cursed God for bringing judgment on them.

#### **4) THE REWARD**

#### **Revelation 3:12**

*He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.*

Notice that this pillar is permanent; he will not go out of it anymore. What comfort! There’s joy for every person who loves Yahweh and lives by His power. This pillar has three names written on it: the name of God, the new Jerusalem, and finally, Jesus’ new name. Note also the sequence. First Yahweh, then the new Jerusalem, the faithful Church, and finally, Jesus’ new name though we do not know what that new

name is. The true believer lives for and upholds in his life Yahweh, the Church, and Jesus. That's why he is made a pillar in God's temple.

### **Jesus intensely cares for Yahweh and for His Church**

We can also see the humility of Jesus. The sequence tells us something about Jesus. He puts himself last and does not reveal his new name. That shows he is more concerned for Yahweh and the Church. We can take comfort in that Jesus shows his intense concern for the glory of God and His Church.

### **The faithful Church is the pillar and support of the truth**

#### **Colosians 3:1-3**

<sup>1</sup>If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup>For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

In anticipation of our role as pillars, we must learn to set our hearts and minds on the things above where Jesus is. That is where prayer and the Word of God come in.

### **Pillar one part of the temple which is the support of the truth**

Now let's turn to 1 Timothy 3:15; we will look at this word "pillar."

#### **1 Timothy 3:15**

*But in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support (or foundation, bulwark) of the truth.*

Let's look at the meaning of "pillar" and "support."

**Pillar:** 2. a pers. or community recognized for spiritual leadership, pillar and support [BDAG]

**Support:** foundation, mainstay, support [Friberg]; that which provides a firm base for something, perh. Mainstay [BDAG]

Both are similar in meaning: foundation, mainstay, or support. This pillar is of the truth and supports God's truth. So, the love for the truth is essential.

### **Jesus delegated his authority to the church leaders**

#### **Matthew 16:18-19**

<sup>18</sup>And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. <sup>19</sup>I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Since the pillar is the support and mainstay, it has to be strong. "Peter" in Greek simply means "rock." It is spiritually so solid and stable that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. This verse is similar to the verse we read in Rev 3:7, except that Jesus has delegated his authority to Peter, to the church leaders.

### **Galatians 2:9**

*And when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.*

James, Cephas (Peter), and John are pillars because spiritually, they are the strongest. Hence they have become the support or foundation of the Church.

### **Remain faithful and you will be the pillar, part of the temple forever**

In this context, the word "pillar" then has this meaning of "authority, strength, and stability." So Jesus is saying to the church in Philadelphia, "If you remain faithful, you will be part of the new temple that will stand forever." There seems to be a role for the future temple, which turns out to be the new Jerusalem (Rev21:22). What God's purpose is, we have yet to find out!

### **Spiritual strength and stability comes from relationship with God**

#### **2 Kings 6:15-17**

<sup>15</sup>*When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?"*

<sup>16</sup>*He said, "Do not be afraid, **for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.**"* <sup>17</sup>*Then Elisha prayed and said, "O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see." So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.*

This matter of strength and stability is what we need to learn today because that is the key to this passage in Revelation 3. How can we be strong and be overcomers? How can we be so effective that even the enemies will come and bow down? There are many things in our Christian life that Yahweh promises us, but our foundation's strength is what matters. Without it, nothing will work in our spiritual life.

Now 2 Kings 6 has to do with Elisha in comparison with his attendant or servant. When they saw the Syrian army surrounding the house, his servant panicked. But Elisha said, "Don't be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." So you can see Elisha's spiritual strength. It comes from his relationship with God. Elisha then prayed to Yahweh, "Open his eyes that he may see." And Yahweh opened the servant's eyes, and he saw the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.



Now that is Old Testament. But even there, you can see the stability of Elisha. His strength and composure have to do with his relationship with God. I think we would appreciate this kind of people, isn't it? When in times of uncertainty and anxiety, people panic. We need somebody who has this stability and doesn't panic. Why? Because he knows what to do. No matter how bad the situation is, he can calmly direct the people on what to do. Now, this kind of commander commands a lot of respect. He knows what is the right thing to do despite the adverse conditions.

We see this in the life of our Lord Jesus himself. When he and his disciples were on the boat, there was a big storm. The winds and the rain rocked the boat, and yet Jesus was sleeping! Remarkably, he could still rest in God despite the storm! To show that he is not living in delusion, he stood up and ordered the winds and the waves to stop, and they stopped. So this is no self-deception; he knew what he was going to do. This stability comes from alertness before Yahweh and knowing what He wanted to do in that situation.

So then, Paul was saying that James, Peter, and John share the exact characteristics of our Lord Jesus. Before, they weren't, but now they are.

### **The peace of God is your strength**

#### **Philippians 4:6-7**

*<sup>6</sup>Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will **guard** your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

The pillar-like characteristics are not just in the future; they can be experienced here and now, though not in its fullness. It is possible when the peace of God comes into your life. We don't need to look for the heavenly hosts. What Yahweh wants us to look at is Jesus himself. He will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. In him, we have the peace of God.

So we have to learn this through prayer, in other words. And that is why if we don't commit ourselves to prayer, at least in the meaningful sense of the word, then we will never know the peace and the strength of God. Did you notice? It is the peace that is your strength. It delivers you from anxiety. So we all don't need to get high blood pressure.

### **Anxiety – a form of distrust in God**

Here's a reference from the Old Testament:

#### **Isaiah 26:3**

*You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.*

Continuing in a state of anxiety, in a way, is a form of distrust in God. It simply shows a problem in your relationship with Him. On the other hand, if we truly trust Him, He will keep us not only in peace but in **perfect** peace.

**Let go and know that Yahweh is God**

**Psalms 46:10**

*Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!*

David knows what it is to be still before God. If we are anxious, we can't be still. So we have to learn this stillness each day. We need to plead with God for strength and let go of ourselves. We need Him to help us direct our hearts and minds towards Him so we don't keep thinking of problems or what we need to do next. The mind is often too active when we are in a state of anxiety.

"Be still" in Hebrew simply means "Let go." That's why the Lord's prayer is so essential: Thy Kingdom come. For Him to rule in us, we have to abandon everything from ourselves, and then we will find our rest in God.

Let us learn this well. The person who rests in God will become a strength to others too. You can also teach others to rest in Him because you have learned it from your own experience. It involves living out Gal 2:20. We let go of everything of ourselves so that it is no longer I but Christ who lives in us.

So a person who practices this today, right now, will know the fullness of its meaning when Jesus comes. We will find our permanent place in God's temple. We need not go out of the temple anymore as we forever bear the name of Yahweh, the new Jerusalem, and Jesus' new name. Again, we see the unity of Father, Son, and the Church. We are united with the Father and the Son so that our Lord's intercessory prayer in John 17 is fulfilled. So I hope this will be our experience today so we can long for its future glorious fulfillment.