

CHAPTER 2

The apostle John, having in the foregoing chapter written the things which he had seen, now proceeds to write the things that are, according to the command of God (~~611~~ Revelation 1:19), that is, the present state of the seven churches of Asia, with which he had a particular acquaintance, and for which he had a tender concern. He was directed to write to every one of them according to their present state and circumstances, and to inscribe every letter to the angel of that church, to the minister or rather ministry of that church, called angels because they are the messengers of God to mankind. In this chapter we have,


- I.** The message sent to Ephesus (v. 1-7).
- II.** To Smyrna (v. 8-11).
- III.** To Pergamos (v. 12-17).
- IV.** To Thyatira (v. 18, etc.).

~~611~~ REVELATION 2:1-7

THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS

We have here,

- I.** The inscription, where observe,
 - 1.** To whom the first of these epistles is directed: *To the church of Ephesus*, a famous church planted by the apostle Paul (Acts 19), and afterwards watered and governed by John, who had his residence very much there. We can hardly think that Timothy was the angel, or sole pastor and bishop, of this church at this time, — that he who was of a very excellent spirit, and naturally cared for the good state of the souls of the people, should become so remiss as to deserve the rebukes given to the ministry of this church. Observe,
 - 2.** From whom this epistle to Ephesus was sent; and here we have one of those titles that were given to Christ in his appearance to John in the chapter foregoing: *He that holds the seven stars in his right hand, and*

walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks,  Revelation 1:13, 16. This title consists of two parts: —

(1.) *He that holds the stars in his right hand.* The ministers of Christ are under his special care and protection. It is the honour of God that he knows the number of the stars, calls them by their names, *binds the sweet influences of Pleiades and looses the bands of Orion*; and it is the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ that the ministers of the gospel, who are greater blessings to the church than the stars are to the world, are in his hand. He directs all their motions; he disposes of them into their several orbs; he fills them with light and influence; he supports them, or else they would soon be falling stars; they are instruments in his hand, and all the good they do is done by his hand with them.

(2.) *He walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks.* This intimates his relation to his churches, as the other his relation to his ministers. Christ is in an intimate manner present and conversant with his churches; he knows and observes their state; he takes pleasure in them, as a man does to walk in his garden. Though Christ is in heaven, he walks in the midst of his churches on earth, observing what is amiss in them and what it is that they want. This is a great encouragement to those who have the care of the churches, that the Lord Jesus has graven them upon the palms of his hands.

II. The contents of the epistle, in which, as in most of those that follow, we have,

1. The commendation Christ gave this church, ministers and members, which he always brings in by declaring that he knows their works, and therefore both his commendation and reprehension are to be strictly regarded; for he does not in either speak at a venture: he knows what he says. Now the church of Ephesus is commended,

(1.) For their diligence in duty: *I know thy works, and thy labour*, v. 2. This may more immediately relate to the ministry of this church, which had been laborious and diligent. Dignity calls for duty. Those that are stars in Christ's hand had need to be always in motion, dispensing light to all about them. *For my name's sake thou hast laboured, and hast not fainted*, v. 3. Christ keeps an account of every day's work, and every hour's work, his servants do for him, *and their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.*

(2.) For their patience in suffering: *Thy labour and thy patience*, v. 2. It is not enough that we be diligent, but we must be patient, and endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ. Ministers must have and exercise great patience, and no Christian can be without it. There must be bearing patience, to endure the injuries of men and the rebukes of Providence; and there must be waiting patience, that, when they have done the will of God, they may receive the promise: *Thou hast borne, and hast patience*, v. 3. We shall meet with such difficulties in our way and work as require patience to go on and finish well.

(3.) For their zeal against what was evil: *Thou canst not bear those that are evil*, v. 2. It consists very well with Christian patience not to dispense with sin, much less allow it; though we must show all meekness to men, yet we must show a just zeal against their sins. This their zeal was the more to be commended because it was according to knowledge, a discreet zeal upon a previous trial made of the pretences, practices, and tenets of evil men: *Thou hast tried those that say they are apostles and are not, and hast found them liars*. True zeal proceeds with discretion; none should be cast off till they be tried. Some had risen up in this church that pretended to be not ordinary ministers, but apostles; and their pretensions had been examined but found to be vain and false. Those that impartially search after truth may come to the knowledge of it.

2. The rebuke given to this church: *Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee*, v. 4. Those that have much good in them may have something much amiss in them, and our Lord Jesus, as an impartial Master and Judge, takes notice of both; though he first observes what is good, and is most ready to mention this, yet he also observes what is amiss, and will faithfully reprove them for it. The sin that Christ charged this church with was their decay and declension in holy love and zeal: *Thou hast left thy first love*; not left and forsaken the object of it, but lost the fervent degree of it that at first appeared. Observe,

(1.) The first affections of men towards Christ, and holiness, and heaven, are usually lively and warm. God remembered the love of Israel's espousals, when she would follow him whithersoever he went.

(2.) These lively affections will abate and cool if great care be not taken, and diligence used, to preserve them in constant exercise.

(3.) Christ is grieved and displeased with his people when he sees them grow remiss and cold towards him, and he will one way or other make them sensible that he does not take it well from them.

3. The advice and counsel given them from Christ: *Remember therefore whence thou hast fallen, and repent, etc.*

(1.) Those that have lost their first love *must remember whence they have fallen*; they must compare their present with their former state, and consider how much better it was with them then than now, how much peace, strength, purity, and pleasure they have lost, by leaving their first love, — how much more comfortably they could lie down and sleep at night, — how much more cheerfully they could awake in the morning, — how much better they could bear afflictions, and how much more becomingly they could enjoy the favours of Providence, — how much easier the thoughts of death were to them, and how much stronger their desires and hopes of heaven.

(2.) They must repent. They must be inwardly grieved and ashamed for their sinful declension; they must blame themselves, and shame themselves, for it, and humbly confess it in the sight of God, and judge and condemn themselves for it.

(3.) They must return and do their first works. They must as it were begin again, go back step by step, till they come to the place where they took the first false step; they must endeavour to revive and recover their first zeal, tenderness, and seriousness, and must pray as earnestly, and watch as diligently, as they did when they first set out in the ways of God.

4. This good advice is enforced and urged,

(1.) By a severe threatening, if it should be neglected: *I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of its place.* If the presence of Christ's grace and Spirit be slighted, we may expect the presence of his displeasure. He will come in a way of judgment, and that suddenly and surprisingly, upon impenitent churches and sinners; he will unchurch them, take away his gospel, his ministers, and his ordinances from them, and what will the churches or the angels of the churches do when the gospel is removed?

(2.) By an encouraging mention that is made of what was yet good among them: *This thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I*

also hate, v. 6. “Though thou hast declined in thy love to what is good, yet thou retainest thy hatred to what is evil, especially to what is grossly so.” The Nicolaitans were a loose sect who sheltered themselves under the name of Christianity. They held hateful doctrines, and they were guilty of hateful deeds, hateful to Christ and to all true Christians; and it is mentioned to the praise of the church of Ephesus that they had a just zeal and abhorrence of those wicked doctrines and practices. An indifference of spirit between truth and error, good and evil, may be called *charity* and *meekness*, but it is not pleasing to Christ. Our Saviour subjoins this kind commendation to his severe threatening, to make the advice more effectual.

III. We have the conclusion of this epistle, in which, as in those that follow, we have,

1. A call to attention: *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.* Observe,

(1.) What is written in the scriptures is spoken by the Spirit of God.

(2.) What is said to one church concerns all the churches, in every place and age.

(3.) We can never employ our faculty of hearing better than in hearkening to the word of God: and we deserve to lose it if we do not employ it to this purpose. Those who will not hear the call of God now will wish at length they had never had a capacity of hearing any thing at all.

2. A promise of great mercy to those who overcome. The Christian life is a warfare against sin, Satan, the world, and the flesh. It is not enough that we engage in this warfare, but we must pursue it to the end, we must never yield to our spiritual enemies, but fight the good fight, till we gain the victory, as all persevering Christians shall do; and the warfare and victory shall have a glorious triumph and reward. That which is here promised to the victors is that they shall *eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God.* They shall have that perfection of holiness, and that confirmation therein, which Adam would have had if he had gone well through the course of his trial: he would then have eaten of the tree of life which was in the midst of paradise, and this would have been the sacrament of confirmation to him in his holy and happy state; so all who persevere in their Christian trial and warfare shall derive from Christ, as

the tree of life, perfection and confirmation in holiness and happiness in the paradise of God; not in the earthly paradise, but the heavenly,
☞ Revelation 22:1, 2.

☞ REVELATION 2:8-11

THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA

We now proceed to the second epistle sent to another of the Asian churches, where, as before, observe,

I. The preface or inscription in both parts.

1. The superscription, telling us to whom it was more expressly and immediately directed: *To the angel of the church in Smyrna*, a place well known at this day by our merchants, a city of great trade and wealth, perhaps the only city of all the seven that is still known by the same name, now however no longer distinguished for its Christian church being overrun by Mahomedism.

2. The subscription, containing another of the glorious titles of our Lord Jesus, *the first and the last, he that was dead and is alive*, taken out of ☞ Revelation 1:17, 18.

(1.) Jesus Christ is the *first and the last*. It is but a little scantling of time that is allowed to us in this world, but our Redeemer is the first and the last. He is the first, for by him all things were made, and he was before all things with God and was God himself. he is the last, for all things are made for him, and he will be the Judge of all. This surely is the title of God, from everlasting and to everlasting, and it is the title of one that is an unchangeable Mediator between God and man, *Jesus, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*. He was the first, for by him the foundation of the church was laid in the patriarchal state; and he is the last, for by him the top-stone will be brought forth and laid in the end of time.

(2.) *He was dead and is alive*. He was dead, and died for our sins; he is alive, for he rose again for our justification, and he ever lives to make intercession for us. He was dead, and by dying purchased salvation for us; he is alive, and by his life applies this salvation to us. *And if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled by his death, much more, being*

reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. His death we commemorate every sacrament day; his resurrection and life every sabbath day.

II. The subject-matter of this epistle to Smyrna, where, after the common declaration of Christ's omniscience, and the perfect cognizance he has of all the works of men and especially of his churches, he takes notice,

1. Of the improvement they had made in their spiritual state. This comes in in a short parentheses; yet it is very emphatic: *But thou art rich* (v. 0), poor in temporals, but rich in spirituals — poor in spirit, and yet rich in grace. Their spiritual riches are set off by their outward poverty. Many who are rich in temporals are poor in spirituals. Thus it was with the church of Laodicea. Some who are poor outwardly are inwardly rich, rich in faith and in good works, rich in privileges, rich in bonds and deeds of gift, rich in hope, rich in reversion. Spiritual riches are usually the reward of great diligence; *the diligent hand makes rich.* Where there is spiritual plenty, outward poverty may be better borne; and when God's people are impoverished in temporals, for the sake of Christ and a good conscience, he makes all up to them in spiritual riches, which are much more satisfying and enduring.

2. Of their sufferings: *I know thy tribulation and thy poverty* — the persecution they underwent, even to the spoiling of their goods. Those who will be faithful to Christ must expect to go through many tribulations; but Jesus Christ takes particular notice of all their troubles. In all their afflictions, he is afflicted, and he will recompense tribulation to those who trouble them, but to those that are troubled rest with himself.

3. He knows the wickedness and the falsehood of their enemies: *I know the blasphemy of those that say they are Jews, but are not;* that is, of those who pretend to be the only peculiar covenant-people of God, as the Jews boasted themselves to be, even after God had rejected them; or of those who would be setting up the Jewish rites and ceremonies, which were now not only antiquated, but abrogated; these may say that they only are the church of God in the world, when indeed *they are the synagogue of Satan.* Observe,

(1.) As Christ has a church in the world, the spiritual Israel of God, so the devil has his synagogue. Those assemblies which are set up in opposition to the truths of the gospel, and which promote and propagate damnable errors, — those which are set up in opposition to the purity and spirituality

of gospel worship, and which promote and propagate the vain inventions of men and rites and ceremonies which never entered into the thoughts of God, — these are all synagogues of Satan: he presides over them, he works in them, his interests are served by them, and he receives a horrid homage and honour from them.

(2.) For the synagogues of Satan to give themselves out to be the church or Israel of God is no less than blasphemy. God is greatly dishonoured when his name is made use of to promote and patronize the interests of Satan; and he has a high resentment of this blasphemy, and will take a just revenge on those who persist in it.

4. He foreknows the future trials of his people, and forewarns them of them, and fore-arms them against them.

(1.) He forewarns them of future trials: *The devil shall cast some of you into prison, and you shall have tribulation*, v. 10. The people of God must look for a series and succession of troubles in this world, and their troubles usually rise higher. They had been impoverished by their tribulations before; now they must be imprisoned. Observe, It is the devil that stirs up his instruments, wicked men, to persecute the people of God; tyrants and persecutors are the devil's tools, though they gratify their own sinful malignity, and know not that they are actuated by a diabolical malice.

(2.) Christ fore-arms them against these approaching troubles,

[1.] By his counsel: *Fear none of these things*. This is not only a word of command, but of efficacy, no, only forbidding slavish fear, but subduing it and furnishing the soul with strength and courage.

[2.] By showing them how their sufferings would be alleviated and limited. *First*, They should not be universal. It would be some of them, not all, who should be cast into prison, those who were best able to bear it and might expect to be visited and comforted by the rest. *Secondly*, They were not to be perpetual, but for a set time, and a short time: *Ten days*. It should not be everlasting tribulation, *the time should be shortened for the elect's sake*. *Thirdly*, It should be to try them, not to destroy them, that their faith, and patience, and courage, might be proved and improved, and be found to honour and glory.

[3.] By proposing and promising a glorious reward to their fidelity: *Be thou faithful to death, and I will give thee a crown of life*. Observe, *First*, The sureness of the reward: *I will give thee*. He has said it that is able to do it; and he has undertaken that he will do it. They shall have the reward from his own hand, and none of their enemies shall be able to wrest it out of his hand, or to pull it from their heads. *Secondly*, The suitableness of it.

1. A *crown*, to reward their poverty, their fidelity, and their conflict.

2. A *crown of life*, to reward those who are faithful even unto death, who are faithful till they die, and who part with life itself in fidelity to Christ. The life so worn out in his service, or laid down in his cause, shall be rewarded with another and a much better life that shall be eternal.

III. The conclusion of this message, and that, as before, 1. With a call to universal attention, that all men, all the world, should hear what passes between Christ and his churches — how he commends them, how he comforts them, how he reproveth their failures, how he rewards their fidelity. It concerns all the inhabitants of the world to observe God's dealings with his own people; all the world may learn instruction and wisdom thereby.

2. With a gracious promise to the conquering Christian: *He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death*, v. 11. Observe,

(1.) There is not only a first, but a second death, a death after the body is dead.

(2.) This second death is unspeakably worse than the first death, both in the dying pangs and agonies of it (which are the agonies of the soul, without any mixture of support) and in the duration; it is *eternal death*, dying the death, to die and to be always dying. This is hurtful indeed, fatally hurtful, to all who fall under it.

(3.) From this hurtful, this destructive death, Christ will save all his faithful servants; the second death shall have no power over those who are *partakers of the first resurrection*: the first death shall not hurt them, and the second death shall have no power over them.

REVELATION 2:12-17

THE CHURCH IN PERGAMOS

Here also we are to consider,

I. The inscription of this message.

1. To whom it was sent: *To the angel of the church of Pergamos*. Whether this was a city raised up out of the ruins of old Troy, a *Troy nouveau* (as our London was once called), or some other city of the same name, is neither certain nor material; it was a place where Christ had called and constituted a gospel church, by the preaching of the gospel and the grace of his Spirit making the word effectual.

2. Who it was that sent this message to Pergamos: the same Jesus who here describes himself as one that *hath the sharp sword with two edges* (Revelation 1:16), *out of whose mouth went a sharp two-edged sword*. Some have observed that, in the several titles of Christ which are prefixed to the several epistles, there is something suited to the state of those churches; as in that to Ephesus, what could be more proper to awaken and recover a drowsy and declining church than to hear Christ speaking as one that *held the stars in his hand, and walked in the midst of the golden candlesticks?* etc. The church of Pergamos was infested with men of corrupt minds, who did what they could to corrupt both the faith and manners of the church; and Christ, being resolved to fight against them by the sword of his word, takes the title of him that *hath the sharp sword with two edges*.

(1.) The word of God is a sword; it is a weapon both offensive and defensive, it is, in the hand of God, able to slay both sin and sinners.

(2.) It is a *sharp sword*. No heart is so hard but it is able to cut it; it can divide asunder between the soul and the spirit, that is, between the soul and those sinful habits that by custom have become another soul, or seem to be essential to it.

(3.) It is a *sword with two edges*; it turns and cuts every way. There is the *edge* of the law against the transgressors of that dispensation, and the *edge* of the gospel against the despisers of that dispensation; there is an edge to make a wound, and an edge to open a festered wound in order to its

healing. There is no escaping the edge of this sword: if you turn aside to the right hand, it has an edge on that side; if on the left hand, you fall upon the edge of the sword on that side; it turns every way.

II. From the inscription we proceed to the contents of the epistle, in which the method is much the same as is observed in the rest. Here,

1. Christ takes notice of the trials and difficulties this church encountered with: *I know thy works, and where thou dwellest*, etc., v. 13. The works of God's servants are best known when the circumstances under which they did those works are duly considered. Now that which added very much lustre to the good works of this church was the circumstance of the place where this church was planted, a place where *Satan's seat* was. As our great Lord takes notice of all the advantages and opportunities we have for duty in the places where we dwell, so he takes notice of all the temptations and discouragements we meet with from the places where we dwell, and makes gracious allowances for them. This people dwelt where Satan's seat was, where he kept his court. His *circuit* is throughout the world, his *seat* is in some places that are infamous for wickedness, error, and cruelty. Some think that the Roman governor in this city was a most violent enemy to the Christians; and the seat of persecution is Satan's seat.

2. He commends their stedfastness: *Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith*. These two expressions are much the same in sense; the former may, however, signify the effect and the latter the cause or means.

(1.) “*Thou holdest fast my name*; thou art not ashamed of thy relation to me, but accountest it thine honour that my name is named on thee, that, as the wife bears the name of the husband, so thou art called by my name; this thou holdest fast, as thine honour and privilege.”

(2.) “That which has made thee thus faithful is the grace of faith: *thou hast not denied* the great doctrines of the gospel, nor departed from the Christian faith, and by that means thou hast been kept faithful.” Our faith will have a great influence upon our faithfulness. Men who deny the faith of Christ may boast very much of their sincerity, and faithfulness to God and conscience; but it has been seldom known that those who let go the true faith retained their fidelity; usually on that rock on which men make shipwreck of their faith they make shipwreck of a good conscience too. And here our blessed Lord aggrandizes the fidelity of this church from the

circumstance of the times, as well as of the place where they lived: they had been stedfast *even in those days wherein Antipas his faithful martyr was slain among them*. Who this person was, and whether there be anything mysterious in his name, we have no certain account. He was a faithful disciple of Christ, he suffered martyrdom for it, and sealed his faith and fidelity with his blood in the place where Satan dwelt; and though the rest of the believers there knew this, and saw it, yet they were not discouraged nor drawn away from their stedfastness: this is mentioned as an addition to their honour.

3. He reproveth them for their sinful failures (v. 14): *But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there those that hold the doctrine of Balaam, etc., and those that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate*. There were some who taught that it was lawful to eat things sacrificed to idols, and that simple fornication was no sin; they, by an impure worship, drew men into impure practices, as Balaam did the Israelites. Observe,

(1.) The filthiness of the spirit and the filthiness of the flesh often go together. Corrupt doctrines and a corrupt worship often lead to a corrupt conversation.

(2.) It is very lawful to fix the name of the leaders of any heresy upon those who follow them. It is the shortest way of telling whom we mean.

(3.) To continue in communion with persons of corrupt principles and practices is displeasing to God, draws a guilt and blemish upon the whole society: they become *partakers of other men's sins*. Though the church, as such, has no power to punish the persons of men, either for heresy or immorality, with corporal penalties, yet it has power to exclude them from its communion; and, if it do not so, Christ, the head and lawgiver of the church, will be displeased with it.

4. He calls them to repentance: *Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly*, etc., v. 16. Observe here,

(1.) Repentance is the duty of saints as well as sinners; it is a gospel duty.

(2.) It is the duty of churches and communities as well as particular persons; those who sin together should repent together.

(3.) It is the duty of Christian societies to repent of other men's sins, as far as they have been accessory to them, though but so much as by connivance.

(4.) When God comes to punish the corrupt members of a church, he rebukes that church itself for allowing such to continue in its communion, and some drops of the storm fall upon the whole society.

(5.) No sword cuts so deep, nor inflicts so mortal a wound, as the sword of Christ's mouth. Let but the threatenings of the word be set home upon the conscience of a sinner, and he will soon be a terror to himself; let these threatenings be executed, and the sinner is utterly cut off. The word of God will take hold of sinners, sooner or later, either for their conviction or their confusion.

III. We have the conclusion of this epistle, where, after the usual demand of universal attention, there is the promise of great favour to those that overcome. They shall *eat of the hidden manna, and have the new name, and the white stone, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it*, v. 17.

1. The hidden manna, the influences and comforts of the Spirit of Christ in communion with him, coming down from heaven into the soul, from time to time, for its support, to let it taste something how saints and angels live in heaven. This is hidden from the rest of the world — *a stranger intermeddles not with this joy*; and it is laid up in Christ, the ark of the covenant, in the holy of holies.

2. The white stone, with a new name engraven upon it. This white stone is absolution from the guilt of sin, alluding to the ancient custom of giving a white stone to those acquitted on trial and a black stone to those condemned. The new name is the name of adoption: adopted persons took the name of the family into which they were adopted. None can read the evidence of a man's adoption but himself; he cannot always read it, but if he persevere he shall have both the evidence of sonship and the inheritance.

REVELATION 2:18-29

THE CHURCH IN THYATIRA

The form of each epistle is very much the same; and in this, as the rest, we have to consider the inscription, contents, and conclusion.

I. The inscription, telling us,

1. To whom it is directed: *To the angel of the church of Thyatira*, a city of the proconsular Asia, bordering upon Mysia on the north and Lydia on the south, a town of trade, whence came the woman named *Lydia*, a seller of purple, who, being at Philippi in Macedonia, probably about the business of her calling, *heard Paul preach there, and God opened her heart, that she attended to the things that were spoken, and believed, and was baptized*, and entertained Paul and Silas there. Whether it was by her means that the gospel was brought into her own city, Thyatira, is not certain; but that it was there, and successful to the forming of a gospel church, this epistle assures us.

2. By whom it was sent: by *the Son of God*, who is here described as having *eyes like a flame of fire, and feet like as fine brass*. His general title is here, *the Son of God*, that is, the eternal and only-begotten Son of God, which denotes that he has the same nature with the Father, but with a distinct and subordinate manner of subsistence. The description we have here of him is in two characters: —

(1.) That his eyes are like a flame of fire, signifying his piercing, penetrating, perfect knowledge, a thorough insight into all persons and all things, one *who searches the hearts and tries the reins of the children of men* (v. 23), and will make all the churches to know he does so.

(2.) That his feet are like fine brass, that the outgoings of his providence are steady, awful, and all pure and holy. As he judges with perfect wisdom, so he acts with perfect strength and steadiness.

II. The contents or subject-matter of this epistle, which, as the rest, includes,

1. The honourable character and commendation Christ gives of this church, ministry, and people; and this given by one who was no stranger to

them, but well acquainted with them and with the principles from which they acted. Now in this church Christ makes honourable mention,

(1.) Of their *charity*, either more general, a disposition to do good to all men, or more special, to the household of faith: there is no religion where there is no charity.

(2.) Their *service*, their ministration; this respects chiefly the officers of the church, who had laboured in the word and doctrine.

(3.) Their *faith*, which was the grace that actuated all the rest, both their charity and their service.

(4.) Their *patience*; for those that are most charitable to others, most diligent in their places, and most faithful, must yet expect to meet with that which will exercise their patience.

(5.) Their growing fruitfulness: their last works were better than the first. This is an excellent character; when others had *left their first love*, and *lost their first zeal*, these were growing wiser and better. It should be the ambition and earnest desire of all Christians that their last works may be their best works, that they may be better and better every day, and best at last.

2. A faithful reproof for what was amiss. This is not so directly charged upon the church itself as upon some wicked seducers who were among them; the church's fault was that she connived too much at them.

(1.) These wicked seducers were compared to Jezebel, and called by her name. Jezebel was a persecutor of the prophets of the Lord, and a great patroness of idolaters and false prophets. The sin of these seducers was that they attempted to draw the servants of God into fornication, and to offer sacrifices to idols; they called themselves prophets, and so would claim a superior authority and regard to the ministers of the church. Two things aggravated the sin of these seducers, who, being one in their spirit and design, are spoken of as one person: —

[1.] They made use of the name of God to oppose the truth of his doctrine and worship; this very much aggravated their sin.

[2.] They abused the patience of God to harden themselves in their wickedness. God gave them space for repentance, but they repented not. Observe, *First*, Repentance is necessary to prevent a sinner's ruin.

Secondly, Repentance requires time, a course of time, and time convenient; it is a great work, and a work of time. *Thirdly*, Where God gives space for repentance, he expects fruits meet for repentance. *Fourthly*, Where the space for repentance is lost, the sinner perishes with a double destruction.

(2.) Now why should the wickedness of this Jezebel be charged upon the church of Thyatira? Because that church suffered her to seduce the people of that city. But how could the church help it? They had not, as a church, civil power to banish or imprison her; but they had ministerial power to censure and to excommunicate her: and it is probable that neglecting to use the power they had made them sharers in her sin.

3. The punishment of this seducer, this Jezebel, v. 22, 23, in which is couched a prediction of the fall of Babylon.

(1.) *I will cast her into a bed*, into a bed of pain, not of pleasure, into a bed of flames; and those who have sinned with her shall suffer with her; but this may yet be prevented by their repentance.

(2.) *I will kill her children with death*; that is, the second death, which does the work effectually, and leaves no hope of future life, no resurrection for those that are killed by the second death, but only to shame and everlasting contempt.

4. The design of Christ in the destruction of these wicked seducers, and this was the instruction of others, especially of his churches: *All the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and the hearts; and I will give to every one of you according to your works*. God is known by *the judgments that he executes*; and, by this revenge taken upon seducers, he would make known,

(1.) His infallible knowledge of the hearts of men, of their principles, designs, frame, and temper, their formality, their indifference, their secret inclinations to symbolize with idolaters.

(2.) His impartial justice, in *giving every one according to his work*, that the name of Christians should be no protection, their churches should be no sanctuaries for sin and sinners.

5. The encouragement given to those who keep themselves pure and undefiled: *But to you I say, and unto the rest*, etc., v. 24. Observe,

(1.) What these seducers called their doctrines — *depths*, profound mysteries, amusing the people, and endeavouring to persuade them that they had a deeper insight into religion than their own ministers had attained to.

(2.) What Christ called them — *depths of Satan*, Satanical delusions and devices, diabolical mysteries; for there is a *mystery of iniquity*, as well and *the great mystery of godliness*. It is a dangerous thing to despise the mystery of God, and it is as dangerous to receive the mysteries of Satan.

(3.) How tender Christ is of his faithful servants: “*I will lay upon you no other burden; but that which you have already hold fast till I come*, v. 24, 25. I will not overburden your faith with any new mysteries, nor your consciences with any new laws. I only require your attention to what you have received. *Hold that fast till I come*, and I desire no more.” Christ is coming to put an end to all the temptations of his people; and, if they hold fast faith and a good conscience till he come, all the difficulty and danger will be over.

III. We now come to the conclusion of this message, v. 26-29. Here we have,

1. The promise of an ample reward to the persevering victorious believer, in two parts: —

(1.) Very great power and dominion over the rest of the world: *Power over the nations*, which may refer either to the time when the empire should turn Christian, and the world be under the government of the Christian emperor, as in Constantine's time; or to the other world, when believers shall sit down with Christ on his throne of judgment, and join with him in trying, and condemning, and consigning over to punishment the enemies of Christ and the church. *The upright shall have dominion in the morning*.

(2.) Knowledge and wisdom, suitable to such power and dominion: *I will give him the morning-star*. Christ is the morning-star. He brings day with him into the soul, the light of grace and of glory; and he will give his people that perfection of light and wisdom which is requisite to the state of dignity and dominion that they shall have in the morning of the resurrection.

2. This epistle ends with the usual demand of attention: *He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*. In the foregoing

epistles, this demand of attention comes before the concluding promise; but in this, and all that follow, it comes after, and tells us that we should all attend to the promises as well as to the precepts that Christ delivers to the churches.