

# The Three Great Enemies – Part Two

## The World – Continued

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Adapted from John Herbert's notes; Read by Ralph Alley

### 1). Revelation 3:21

"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

- We saw last week that at the Judgment Seat of Christ a division will be made between those Christians who will be classified as 'overcomers' and those Christians who will have been 'overcome'. And, each and every one of us will fall into one of these two categories.
- As each day brings us closer to that Coming Judgment Day, we find that standing before each of us *individually* are three great enemies. These three great enemies are inextricably linked, and are demonically orchestrated to bring shipwreck into the life of the believer. All of this is done with a view to disqualify each one of us from a position of rulership with Christ in His Kingdom (*i.e., to cause us to be overcome*).
- And these enemies are the world, the flesh and the devil.
- If we are going to be called overcomers *in that Day*, we will have to overcome these three enemies throughout the course of our pilgrim journey.
- The first of these enemies—the world—is further described for us in 1 John—  
**1John 2:16**  
For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.
- Last week we dealt with this verse, each phrase in turn, realizing that 'the lust of the flesh' had to do with covetousness with regards to material possessions; 'the lust of the eyes' had to do with envy with regards to other people and 'the pride of life' had to do with a prideful self-confidence because of who we are or what we have in the natural (with no regard for our identity in Christ).
  - Also remember from last week that 'the pride of life' is typified in the attitude of the Laodecian church recorded in the Book of Revelation –  
**Revelation 3:17**  
"Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' -  
-and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—
- And with all of these phrases from 1 John we can see a focus on the desire for present gratification rather than a future hope.

2). As we continue to look at our enemy, 'the world', this week, we will go back into the Book of Revelation to examine another of its deceptive plays. After we do this, we'll take a look at the scriptural means of overcoming the world in all its forms.

## Revelation 2:12

"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: 13 "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. 14 "But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. 15 "Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. 16 'Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. 17 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.'"

- In these beginning chapters of Revelation we see that there are 7 letters sent to various churches within Asia Minor. Not only do these 7 letters represent actual, historical churches, they also represent the chronological history of the entire church dispensation. Keeping that in mind, let's notice that this letter to Pergamos follows the letter addressed to Smyrna. The name Smyrna comes from the Greek word for myrrh, which is a substance associated with death; therefore, the letter to Smyrna (death) would be pointing to that period of church history when Christians were severely persecuted by a succession of Roman emperors.
- Even though you could say that this persecution was demonically inspired to eradicate those who would embrace their heavenly calling, the result was actually the opposite. The greater the number of Christians who were martyred, the greater the numbers in the church increased. This caused the famous observation by one of the early church fathers of that period (Tertullian), – 'the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.'
- This Satanic strategy of physical persecution and suffering was a resounding failure. Subsequently, we see a change in tactic by the one who inspired it– we see a reverting back to a previous tactic employed against Israel in order to prevent that nation from obtaining the rights of the firstborn.
  - This change in strategy began during the reign of Constantine (third century AD) and came to its goal toward the end of the fourth century AD when Theodosius the First issued an edict that made Christianity the exclusive religion of the Roman empire. That which was to have been separate from the world system under Satan was now enmeshed within that system. And unfortunately, this is still the place where the church in general finds itself today.
  - And isn't it interesting that the next church mentioned in Revelation after Smyrna (Death) is Pergamos, whose name comes from the Greek word 'gamos,' which means **marriage**. This would be drawing attention to this very time within church history when the church became 'married' to the world.
  - And unfortunately, this is the very thing that the Lord Himself had foretold in one of His parables–

Matthew 13:31

Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, 32 "which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

3). Now there are two things we should note about the Lord's condemnation of the church at Pergamos. He said that they had there "those who hold to the doctrine of Balaam" and those who 'hold to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans."

- Both of these condemned, contrary 'doctrines' represent a direct attack on the truth of the word of God. This is in fulfillment of that recorded by the Apostle Paul to his fellow teacher Timothy—

1Timothy 4:1

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons...

- The comment addressing the "doctrine of Balaam" refers to those that embrace and accept the values, perceptions and practices of the world, **based on the assumption that there would be no consequences for doing so**. This is just as Balaam had persuaded Israel-- that there would be no consequence for their becoming entwined with the nations surrounding them because they were God's chosen people.
- The reference to "the doctrine of the Nicolaitans" has to do with the embracing of worldly power structures and bringing them into the church, creating a 'priestly' class that elevates itself to a position of superiority and exclusivity, thereby 'lording it over' those who cannot attain to such a privileged position.
- Jesus then adds another comment to this unhappy chronological picture of Church history in His letter to the Church in Thyatira (continuing with the 7 churches in Revelation)—

Revelation 2:20

"Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols."

- And what we are seeing in all of these comments concerning the history of the Church is the introduction of, **and acceptance of**, a message that runs contrary to the truth of the Word of God. This is a complete corruption of the word of the Kingdom, just as Christ had foretold in another Matthew 13 parable –

Matthew 13:33

Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."

- In the doctrine of Balaam, the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, and in the teaching of Jezebel we see a preoccupation with *what would be gained in the present* rather than looking to the future.
- You might be thinking that you can probably identify some of the major areas of corruption in the teachings of the Church at large today...such as it not mattering what we do because

God's grace covers it all...and/or we are already guaranteed of our rewards... but of course that would run contrary to the Scriptures, such as –

1Corinthians 6:9

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?

- And there are numerous others Scriptures we could cite.

4). Identifying that which is blatantly corrupt is a good thing, but if we keep in mind that we have all come out from churches that are the result of 2000 years of corruption, it must cause us to wonder how much of that corruption we may carry around with us without even realizing it? And how much of it influences our experience here at Cornerstone? (Good questions, huh?)

- It would be extremely sad if our experience at Cornerstone is no more than just our old church with a different message. And it would be easy to be sucked into that way of thinking, because we don't know anything else. And we are always more comfortable with what is familiar.
- But if we come to realize that embracing the Kingdom message must result in **life change** ...we must also realize that the life change we experience is not in a vacuum – it changes our life in every aspect – whether here, at work, or in the supermarket. It can't just be 'church' as usual.

5). There is so much that could be said about this, but let's focus on one recurring theme, something that seems ever before us at the moment.

- This is best identified in a comment from Peter (a passage that we should be familiar with)—  
2Peter 3:3  
...knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, 4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."  
  
• Look at where the mindset behind the scoffers assertion leads...If we are not focused on that future Day – 'where is the promise of His coming?' - then we are inevitably focused on the present day. And if this happens, we would (as a result, after some fashion) be walking in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.  
  
• We must grasp that there is a difference between **living** in the present, which is inescapable, and **being focused** on the present. A focus on the present has its attention on my life now, and places itself within the kingdom of Satan, rather than looking to our life in the age to come –  
John 17:15  
"I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.  
  
• We are in the world, but we don't need to be of the world.  
John 17:16

"They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

6). Now, keeping this whole thought in mind, let's consider what, 'where is the promise of His coming?' has done to what we call 'church'.

- For the greater majority of Christianity in the western world, 'church' has become something you *attend*, that has a physical location and set times of operation. Unfortunately, the mindset for some has become "well, so long as I attend fairly regularly I'm OK. I may not get the prize for perfect attendance, but that's alright." And even more unfortunate for those who think this way is that this is a lie and a deception .
- 'Church' isn't something we attend, **it is what we are....wherever we are... at all times.**
- The Greek word for 'church' is 'ekklesia,' which literally means 'called out,' seen in the sense of *having a purpose*, as we read in the following verses—

Ephesians 4:1

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called...

Hebrews 3:1

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus...

- Do we realize that if we see 'church' as just something we attend it gives us the excuse to step away from any personal responsibility towards holiness? And our failure to do what's right then easily becomes "well, the church has failed us."
- And if 'church' is something we attend (rather than what we are), we can get sidetracked by **the form of it** instead of participating in **the function**. In other words, we can become more concerned about the way things are done, than what we are here for.
- Do you know it really doesn't matter what color the walls are, or how soft the seats are, or whether we sing before the message or after – these are just matters of personal choice – but that is not, nor ever should be the issue.
- Scripture is clear with regards to the function of the Church-

Ephesians 4:11

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ-- 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Hebrews 10:24

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

- What do these Scriptures teach with respect to corporate gathering? We see that the ministry of the pastor/teacher is **expressly for** the equipping of the saints **through the teaching of the word of God**. As seen in a very recognizable verse in Second Timothy—

2Timothy 3:16

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

- So we can see an **individual responsibility** to act upon what is taught, whereby every part does its share, causing growth of the body in love.
- And then we see an individual responsibility to assemble ourselves together and exhort one another with respect to love and good works. And according to our Hebrews scripture, why would we do this? ***Because we see the Day approaching, because our focus is future and not present. That which we see out ahead dictates what we do now.***
- If and when we see *'the world' in the church*, we see the requirements of performance, entertainment and ear tickling, i.e. "make me feel good now." What we should see, however, is *the church in 'the world'* with each individual working out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

7). Let's take a look at the Church in its infancy, as seen in the Book of Acts –

Acts 2:42

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. 46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

- Did you notice that they continued in the apostles' doctrine **daily**, in the temple and from house to house? They ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart. They praised God. They broke bread, they had fellowship, and they *prayed*.
- *And all these things they continued to do steadfastly.*
  - The Greek word for 'steadfast' is the word 'proskartereo,' which means to be earnest towards, to persevere, be constantly diligent, or to adhere closely to (as a servitor):--attend (give self) continually.
- What we just read in Acts is exactly what is laid out for us in the Ephesians 4 and Hebrews 10 scriptures.

- And this should be particularly interesting for us because what we see here in Acts is the church ***before the leaven was introduced, before it became enmeshed with the world.***
- For those folks the race of the faith was their life, it was their daily preoccupation and their priority and ***it was not burdensome.*** And they lived in a world under Roman occupation, amidst disease and poverty, with the daily pressure of earning a living and raising a family.
- So how in the midst of a regular life, with the same pressures as we have, were they able to keep that focus? Verses 44 and 45 (from Acts 2) give us the answer –
 

44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.
- It is not the selling of their possessions and goods of itself that is the answer, but the reason why they chose to do that. ***It was because their focus was on the age to come;*** they were focused on their appearance at the Judgment Seat of Christ and because of that, nothing they had in this world had any intrinsic value any longer –
 

Matthew 6:20  
"but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal."
- I am not saying that we have to rush out and sell our possessions and goods! But we do need to emulate the mindset behind doing so...we do need to emulate their practice with regards to the teaching of the apostles' doctrine. For it was out of that teaching, and their engagement with it, and their exhorting one another from it, ***that their future hope became more real than their present reality.***
- We need to let go of the temporal..... and cling to that which is everlasting--

Psalms 102:25

Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. 26 They will perish, but You will endure; Yes, they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will change them, And they will be changed. 27 But You are the same, And Your years will have no end.

And--

2Peter 3:11

Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

- And we need to do it in one accord, ***having the same mind,*** with gladness and simplicity of heart...praising God.
- A quick self check at this point may help us see if the world has conformed us to its pattern or whether we are breaking free: Ask yourselves the question, 'Is my week framed by seeking the Kingdom first, or does seeking the Kingdom first have to fit in to the framework of my week?'

8). If our answer is in the first part of our question, then what we are about to see will enable us to continue to overcome the world. And if we should find our self in the second part of the question, then what we are about to see will transform us from being overcome by the world to being an overcomer.... if we will embrace it and put it into practice.

- Firstly, do you remember the scripture last week from the Book of James that spoke of us keeping ourselves unspotted from the world? –

James 1:27

Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

- And remember how being unspotted from the world had to do with being washed with water **by the word**?
- And secondly, remember how we were not to be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of our mind? And how that renewing of the mind came through mature knowledge? As we read in Colossians –  
Colossians 3:10  
...and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him...
- Both of these scriptures have as their focus **Christ and His coming Kingdom**, and contextually they are both set in complete opposition to this present world system. And as we will now see, this is the key to overcoming the world.

9). Jesus said –

John 16:33

"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

- How did Jesus overcome the world? What did His resurrection make possible? -

1Peter 1:3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

- This is our hope, this is the subject of our faith. This is the end to which we need to be steadfast and diligent, daily.

10). And in the Book of First John we read—

1John 5:1

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. 4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

- Right here the whole of the matter is put succinctly for us.
- Those who are born from above -born of God – are then in a position to be faithfully obedient to the commandments of God, and in this way they overcome the world.
- The word 'born' in verses 1 and 4 is the Greek word, 'gennao' and is written in the perfect tense, showing that this is a work completed in time past, with the results extending into the present time in a finished state. This is referencing the salvation of our spirit, that which we received as a result of the finished work of Christ.
- Then the word 'overcomes' in verses 4 and 5 is the Greek word 'nikao,' written in the present and aorist tenses, showing something that is continuous and occurring, **not completed** as we would find with the use of the perfect tense.
- So what will be the victory that will overcome the world? Our faith. And our faith overcoming the world is a continuous process, never a one-time event—

**Romans 1:16**

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

- And our faith is not some nebulous concept of wish fulfillment. No, the definition of our faith is clearly laid out in the fifth verse of our 1 John scripture –  
**5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?**
- Did you catch it? – 'he who believes [who has faith] that Jesus is the Son of God'. Don't miss what this phrase means, because this is such a common expression. Where does the phrase 'Jesus is the Son of God' take us? 2 Samuel 7 Let's read it—

**2Samuel 7:12**

*"When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 "I will be his Father, and he shall be My son.*

- And I hope that we realize that we can't get to 2 Samuel 7 without beginning in Genesis 1:1. So let's review exactly what is contained in that seemingly simple expression, 'believes that Jesus is the Son of God.' It is the understanding and accepting of everything God has said

about His plans and purposes for His Son and for Man that have been set in place from the foundation of the world...all of which comes to its glorious culmination in the Millennial Kingdom.

- And it will be **this belief** that will enable us to overcome the world, because we will not set our heart and mind on our present circumstances.... but on the great and precious promises that have been given to us. And consequently, we will focus on what it takes to *receive* those promises. We won't want our best life now, we will be looking for a glorified life then.
- *And it won't be just the believing that will do it.* It will be our faithful obedience.... our putting into practice that which scripture teaches. It will require us to be a **doer** of the word and not a **hearer** only. And this faith comes by only one means –

Romans 10:17

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

- This then brings us right back to the very reason why we are here this morning, and the purpose for us being gathered together – to receive with gladness and simplicity the word of God, to continue steadfastly in it throughout the week ahead, to exhort one another with respect to it whenever we gather together, and to pray for ourselves and others because of it...all so that we might overcome the world and be found worthy at His Judgment Seat.
- Please let us not listen to the doctrine of Balaam and the teaching of Jezebel that would cause us to be **self** seeking, looking only to the present. Please let's not listen to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans and construct for ourselves a priestly class who would do our reading and our Bible study and our praying for us. Please, let's let our model be that which we see in the Book of Acts, the Church in her infancy before the destructive leaven takes its toll.
- Let's close with one more scripture –

Colossians 3:1

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died,[to the world, the flesh and the devil] and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.