

Lecture Revelation 3

Bethyl Joy Shepperson

God's Word is creative and unchanging. Aren't we thankful He uses Verizon Wireless?
Can you hear Me now?

After all, how do you communicate if no one listens? I've sat alongside desperate, bent-over individuals who are emotionally beaten down, wanting to give up. They didn't need words to express their pain—their body language screamed ***Can't anyone hear me?***

Have an “ear to hear?”

A good soak in John 10 teaches ***My sheep hear My voice!*** To each church He says: ***He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says.*** A point to make! We do hear Him. It's not a question of capability! But, when we ACT as though we don't hear Him – He doesn't let us by with it! When **we**, like church folks in Sardis and Laodicea, fail to heed His Voice, He finds us and says... ***Can you hear Me now! My sheep hear My voice!*** The one condition of becoming an expert listener is obedience. Every time I hear the voice, and follow, I sharpen my sense of hearing; then, the next time the voice I hear will sound even more clear.

Several years ago, Derek Lauer, filled in the remaining lectures for his Mom, following her sudden death. I'll never forget him teaching, *delayed obedience is 100% disobedience.* Each time we disobey our hearing becomes more dull. It's the law of opposites. We get better at what we practice—sharpness or dullness. It's your choice.

Jesus walked this earth, hearing and seeing, the desperation in the eyes of those who ran after him – like those people on Tuesday who were running behind the crowds that stood waiting for the Motorcade of our new President to pass by—they were running behind the stack of people, hoping to catch a real live glimpse of him if he got out of his Limo and walked on Pennsylvania Avenue among the people. President Obama DID leave the safety zone of the car, take a risk, and walk so **we, the people, could see him.** Jesus did the same—He left the comforts of His glorious home, and walked among us—and for that reason He's been called the 3-mile-an-hour Jesus. He looks for us: He saw them some 1950 years back, and sees us now. His ever-seeking eye scans: who's searching for Me; His ear listens intently for those who have lost their way.

So, He writes Dear Sardis, Laodicia, and Philadelphia, Here's **what I see!** If you have an ear, hear what The Spirit says. Listen up! I can't tell you when but I'll see you soon. Love, Jesus!

Jesus says: I came *to seek and save those who are lost.* Desperate people want to be found. His desire? That we **live loved and alive**—garnering every chance to “feed” to “water” to “touch” those who are still *sick and lost.*

Important about Laodicea

Offer the drink I AM...don't be "watered-down." I'm genuine, not pretend. Don't run from your suffering because it's the fabric from which I bring out the best in you—breathtaking gold. I have no desire to see you naked and blind. HERE! I'M HERE. I'm at your heart—you will recognize My Presence close when your fear of being humiliated, your resistance to the possibility of being shamed start your heart pounding. Follow ME. Submit to the humiliations of which you're afraid when My Spirit directs you in being "hot" and "refreshingly cold" for my sake. Don't pull from the nudge. For the riches that are yours through Me can't be bought—you'll be pure, dressed in white, beautifully adorned.

Jesus WANTS to BE with you, and the Bible says He wants to enter and eat meals with you. He's a lover's desire to be intimately connected with you. He wants the drink you receive and the one you serve to be "intensely" tasty. Not "ho-hum"—But, drawn from His Living Spirit -- a living river that runs hot – like sipping hot tea or coffee for a long stretch of time as you rest in one another's presence and share... or like drinking from a bubbling brook of ice cold refreshment that quenches your thirst on a hot day; a thirst to be heard, seen, valued, appreciated, ... and loved!

Some weeks ago HE came to me "when I wasn't looking." I **recognized I was hearing softly and tenderly Jesus is calling...calling for you ...** I thought. ME? What are You saying Lord? ***O for the wonderful love He has promised, promised for you and for me. Come Home. Come Home. You who are weary come home!*** Even as I wrote this my eyes teared up... Come Home? ***Yes, Bethyl, come home!*** You know, more than I knew, HE KNEW my head was weary, my body was hurt, my heart hungry, and He reached to me through His ever present Holy Spirit, and invited me to come home! He's our Bread, our Refreshing water, and His Goal: That we be "overcoming ones."

He approached the The Laodiceans about their "detachment from Him" in a firm way. Much the way a truly mature parent wisely disciplines and talks turkey to their offspring. The goal? Soak in My Word. Simmer in the Stew of My Word. Maybe the source of the water supply does have to travel 6 miles as it did for Laodicea, and here in southern California – much farther. Maybe "waiting" and "training your spirit to be patient and courageous is hard—but it produces the heartiness of "hot" and "refreshingly cold" that truly quenches your thirst and makes you the "Starbucks-Well" others will walk a long way to be with He wants us to so soak in His Word – soaking long enough that we take real food from His Word so it influences our breathing, our thinking, our attitudes, our actions – He warns the choice IS under our own personal control but know this: ***without ME, you can do nothing!*** Imagine the impact on our actions, attitudes, and thinking if we start each new day focusing on ***without ME, you can do nothing!*** How would my life be different if I soaked in His Springs?

In 1950s Alfred Smith wrote: ***I thirsted in the barren land of sin & shame.
And nothing satisfying there I found; BUT... ONCE He met Christ...
Drinking at the springs of living water, Happy now am I, My soul they satisfy;
Drinking at the springs of living water, O wonderful & bountiful supply.***

John Henry Jowett writes: There's a great orchestral rehearsal being conducted by Sir Michael Costa. The piccolo player held his fingers for just a moment, thinking that his tiny

contribution would never be missed. Immediately Sir Michael raised his hand. “Stop! Where’s the piccolo?” His one note, his one small instrument **was** missed! Do you think The Master hears when we fail to play our note on our small instrument? He has great spiritual discernment and it’s his heart’s desire that we develop that, too.

To the Weakened Church in Sardis

Isn’t this Jesus’ concern at Sardis? **Wake up!** Strengthen what remains. Your appearance is great, but beneath your skin? NOT! Your deeds are incomplete in my sight.

Over-confidence breeds failure.

Relationships break down when we fail to listen and become overconfident. Arrogance grows. We see this illustrated in the location and belief system of Sardis. It was situated about 1500 feet high, and built in such a way that **no one** could attack and overtake them.

The story goes that King Cyrus came to Sardis and found the position of the city ideally suited for defense. He like it and wanted it, but there seemed to be no way to scale the steep cliff walls surrounding the city. He offered a rich reward to any soldier in his army who could figure out a way to get up to the city. One soldier studied the problem carefully. He observed a soldier who was defending Sardis drop his helmet down the cliff walls. He zeroed in, watching as the soldier climbed down a hidden trail to recover his fallen helmet on the outside wall. He marked the location and later, led a detachment of troops up that obscure trail. When they so easily scaled the cliffs, and came to the actual city walls, they found them unguarded.

So confident were the soldiers in the natural defenses of their city that they felt no need to keep a **diligent** watch. The city was easily conquered. Curiously, the same thing happened almost 200 years later when Antiochus attacked and conquered the same overconfident city that didn’t set a watch.

In the same way the Great Wall of China was breeched by enemies several times over the centuries—not due to the wall’s inadequacies, but to sleeping, overconfident, or betraying gatekeepers. Winston Churchill said to Britain in the early days of WW 2: *I must drop one word of caution -- for next to cowardice and treachery -- overconfidence leading to neglect and slothfulness in the worst of wartime crimes.*

Uninstall wrong thinking

History taught them more than once of their wrong thinking and thus their wrong behaviors. Almost like a hard drive with a computer virus, the minds of those in Sardis, -- I’m in that group, too -- reflected **infected files**. Wrong thinking keeps us from operating the way we were designed. If wrong thinking isn’t uninstalled, it undermines everything we do.

Half of learning is learning. The other half of learning is unlearning. Unfortunately, unlearning is twice as hard as learning. Unlearning old “stinking thinking” is twice as hard, and

it often takes twice as long. For example, I can do fine on my own. I'm an individualist. I'm just fine, thanks; just fine....

Rewired to the Mind of Christ

When we study Scripture, when we read these prophecies **and take them to heart**, we are literally upgrading our minds by downloading the mind of Christ. As we read Scripture, we are recruiting new nerve cells and rewiring neuronal connections. In a sense, we're downloading a new operating system that reconfigures the mind. Our brains are rewired in alignment with the Word, and we develop the mind of Christ. We align ourselves with Romans 12:2 *don't conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*

And, what about Philadelphia, The Church in which God Delight

The Holy and True One simply DELIGHTS in you! All you are doing and what you are doing, is Right! Keep on doing it! Don't let anyone distract, seduce, or diminish what you are doing! Hang On!

I don't think the Philadelphia Christians were a different breed of people...but their belief system was wired with an immunity to bad thinking and being overcome with fear and shame viruses. They had confidence in One called Genuine Reality—True—Holy--perfection! They knew they had "little strength." But when "little" is connected to the Main Power Source...well, they knew "**when I am weak, He is strong.**" They lived ***alive with spiritual power*** – practicing, exercising faith—"What time I am afraid, I'll trust you God." "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Joshua fought the battle at Jericho and so can we!

Philadelphia sat on a geological fault. It was destroyed by a severe earthquake that also destroyed Sardis and 10 other cities in 17 BC. Being on the fault line, they frequently were building and rebuilding. Repeatedly, they were having their world shaken. But, they used their spiritual tools to reshape "how they lived life." They incorporated "loss" into their worldview—they learned to hold lightly what they had, what they owned. They recognized an important spiritual truth—all we have isn't ours; it's HIS. God creatively touched Americans in the final quarter of 2008 with an earthquake of huge magnitude. I believe He touched "greed" in so shaking our financial pocketbooks. The financial earthquake literally had aftershocks that rippled through our country and around the world.

The Philadelphians illustrate for us the strengthening that happens when we integrate death with life, sorrow with joy, tough times with the peace of God that passes all understanding that shall guard your hearts and mind in Christ Jesus. The particular financial earthquake we experienced and continue to feel the aftershocks takes us to 1 Chron. 29:11-12 *Everything in the heavens and earth is YOURS, O Lord. This is your Kingdom. We adore You as being in control of everything. Riches and honor come from You Alone. You are the Ruler of all mankind. Your Hand controls power and might; and, it is at Your discretion that men are made great and given strength.*

This church and the people who bring delight to our Lord aren't problem free. They embrace a maturing belief system. ***Consider it wholly joyful, my brethren, whenever you are enveloped in or encounter trials of any sort or fall into various temptations. Be assured and understand that the trial and proving of your faith bring out endurance and steadfastness and patience. But let endurance and steadfastness and patience have full play and do a thorough work, so that you may be a people perfectly and fully developed, lacking nothing—in other words, mature.***

It's running the race and not giving up until it's over! It's maintaining "joy" despite pain and suffering. It's feeling your fear and exercising courage to still act. It's resting on God's promises: Jesus promises to these believers 3 names; names that reveal the character of the one who receives that name:

- The **name of my God**...to be made godlike. It's the Spirit's job to make us godly or godlike. This happens as we mature—we get a little easier to live with.—
- The **name of the city of my God**. We know this to be the "New Jerusalem coming down from heaven" --"as a bride adorned for her husband" --fulfilling this 2nd promise that **we'll know the intimacy of a husband's love for his beautiful bride**.
- **"I'll write on him my new name."** At the time of Jesus birth, he was named "Jesus" because He would save His people from their sin. This redemptive name meant "Yahweh saves." **But when the work of redemption is finished**, when we are all home in glory with Him, Jesus will be given a new work to do. **He'll have** a new name according to Rev. 19:12. No one knows what it is; it will be a new role—but you and I are promised a share in those vast new labors!

**I will change your name.
You shall no longer be called...
wounded, outcast, lonely or afraid.
I will change your name.
Your new name shall be
Confidence, Joyfulness, Overcoming One, Faithfulness, Friend of God
One who seeks My Face.**