

## PURSUE CHRIST AND ACKNOWLEDGE HIM IN ALL WAYS (2)

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*Revelation 2:25 – 26 Nevertheless what you have hold fast till I come. He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations.*

*Revelation 3:10 – 12 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 on the earth. I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. 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 on 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.*

*1Peter 5: 8 be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

*2 Corinthians 11: 14 no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.*

Thank the Lord that He let us see His glorious salvation in His words. This salvation restores man from his fallen state back to God's original plan. This thought that God has in His heart is so glorious, so precious and so full of grace! When God created man, He put man into the manifestation of His glorious self. Simultaneously, He gave man an authority and entrusted man to govern all that He has created. How does God fulfill His purpose of creating man? God did one thing. He put two trees in the most prominent place in the Garden of Eden. There were many fruit trees in Eden. And among all these trees, God put two trees. One is the Tree of Life. The other one is the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Then God told our forefathers: you can eat the fruits of all the trees in the garden. Brothers and sisters, pay attention this this sentence; 'You can eat of the fruits of all the trees in the garden'. Does this include the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil? Yes, it does. But God also spoke of the consequence. 'If you choose to eat of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, surely you will die'. Brothers and sisters, did you notice what was hidden here in God's ordained? If we did not notice, then we think that God's arrangement was without meaning. Why did God say you cannot

eat of the fruits of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil when He put the tree there and said you can eat of all the fruits of the trees in the garden? If we just look at the wording of the text, we do not understand why God did that. The Lord has mercy on us. If He let us know the purpose of His arrangement, then we know this is a solemn problem. And what is the problem?

### The Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

If we are Adam, and God gives us His glory and entrusted to us the authority to govern all that He created, would we be happy? Of course we would be happy if we are to be the manifestation of God's glory and authority. But did you ask yourself what you will base on to execute what God has entrusted to you? If you hold onto this question, then you can understand the purpose why God had the two trees there. What God has entrusted to man is noble and great. We are one who came out of the dust, how can we accomplish what He has entrusted to us? Thus when God put the two trees in the garden, we can see one thing. God's arrangement clearly indicated to our forefather that he should choose to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Life. Even though you could be very capable if you eat of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, but you cannot neglect the consequence that you surely will die. If you surely will die, no matter how great your strength and wisdom are, it is still vanity. Regardless of the level of manifestation you arrived at, death changes the situation.

Why did God want us to focus on the Tree of Life? The simplest answer is if man chooses the Tree of Life, it will result in man being united with God. It is that simple. This is one of the important principles of God's work among men. God put us in a glorious position. But what basis do we stand on to manifest the glory of God? What do we base on to carry out God's authority? At that time, God already let Adam understand that there was only one choice and that he needed to choose to unite with God. The same with us, if we are united with God, then we will have the strength and wisdom to carry out all that God has entrusted to us.

Last time we shared on where God's salvation will lead us to. The eternal purpose of God will have the qualifications to be fulfilled when God finished His working in us. We have already shared about the seven letters in Revelation. What is a very serious issue in the seven letters? In them we see that God needs to gain a group of people who completely understand God's meaning and who will stand on God's side to express what God wants. And this brings us to the purpose of these seven letters. What is the purpose of these seven letters? It is to tell God's children that

these situations will remain until our Lord returns. In other words, if the church is not willing to let our Lord lead her to the maturity God wants, then our Lord will say, I still cannot return. In the two places that we just read in the seven letters, one speaks to the church in Thyatira and the other to the church in Philadelphia. We can look at the words to the church in Thyatira as the words given to any church that is straying farther from God. And the words spoken to the church in Philadelphia we can look at them as words spoken to those children of God who are willing to stand on God's side. But we see a common point in the message to both churches. Regardless of whether you can keep up or whether you are far from our Lord's heart, if you hear the Lord's words and you are willing to repent and return to what you originally have gotten from the Lord, the Lord said: that is correct. Thus the Lord said, 'you need to hold fast to what you have till I come'. To those children who desire to live before God, our Lord Jesus seems to say the same thing: you need to hold fast to what you have. Even though we already have chosen to stand on God's side, yet our Lord still feels that we need the same reminder: you need to hold fast to what you have.

### God's Design for us to be King

Why would the Lord say those things to the church in Philadelphia? What is the difference between her and the church in Thyatira? The difference hinges on this sentence of our Lord 'that no one takes your crown'. This sentence is very meaningful. It tells us to what extent the salvation of God is going to lead us to. And how are we to practically proceed to that point? In His words, our Lord has step by step guidance to make us understand. But because of this sentence that He has said in the seven letters, we notice one thing that we have not thought of before. When you first believed in the Lord, what did you receive from our Lord? If you pay attention to these words of our Lord, then you will understand. The moment we believe in the Lord, according to God's plan, we should already have gotten a result. And one component of this result is to reign with the Son of God. Brothers and sisters, please listen clearly to this. It is not that when you believed in the Lord, you would become a king. Rather, it is at the moment when you believed in the Lord, in God's eternal purpose, our Lord is to lead you to the point where you will reign as king

Why does God put you into the position of being a king? For this we have to look at the original plan that God had when He first created man. Man is created for God's glory and for God's

authority. And how can we fulfill this? Now we understand why we need to take of the fruit of the Tree of Life. The fruit of the Tree of Life enables man to unite with the Son of God. The result is that how the Son of God is, so shall we be. According to God's will, the Son of God is to be King in the kingdom of God. Not only is He to be king in the kingdom but He is to be king in God's infinite eternity; and that is what we know as the New Heaven and new earth. Brothers and sisters, if we can see God's design, when we unite with God, not only will we reign with Christ in the kingdom but also reign with Him through eternity in the New Heaven and earth. We do not even dare to think of this. Now that you heard it, do you believe it is true? Since this is what the Lord has said, He will surely fulfill it according to His word. Just like the hymn we sang, 'God's Promise Will Not Fail'. We thank our Lord.

### Hold Fast to What You Have

Brothers and sisters, I just shared with you God's plan. But will God's plan be realized in us? When we go back to the word of God we can see that eventually it will be realized in us. What each one of us experiences or what each of us has to deal with is different. I do not want to make this matter too complicated. I just want to bring brothers and sisters to what the Lord said to the church in Philadelphia 'hold fast to what you have; that no one takes away your crown'. If you do not have a crown, how can they take the crown away? They can only take the crown away if you have one. Brothers and sisters will ask: when did I get a crown? There is no crown, right? But the Lord said you have it. How can I have a crown? Brothers and sisters do not treat this lightly. This is a big thing. This tells us to what extent He will lead us to when we first received our Lord as our Savior according to the arrangement of our Father God and our Lord.

It tells us that as soon as we received Christ as our Savior, God already gave us the qualifications to receive a crown. Even though the crown has not been put on your head yet, I am sure there is a crown that already has your name on it. Our Lord here shows us that this crown is yours. But you need to hold fast to what you have so no one can take it away. To us, it is that we need to hold fast to the Lord's words so no one can take our crown away.

Brothers and sisters, in these seven letters, God hopes His children will understand the heart desire of our Lord and be one who chooses the Lord. To choose the Lord means that we not only stand on our Lord's side but we also let the Lord be our Lord. This is being an overcomer. I cannot go into the details of what 'to overcome' means. But what is an overcomer? An

overcomer is one who is determined to choose the Lord. And under what circumstances will I choose the Lord? Of course we will choose our Lord when everything is peaceful and stable. But when we are in situations where we have lessons to learn or when we are in trials from the Lord, do we still want to be of the Lord? This is the problem. This is the test for the church where the Lord said to the church 'hold fast till I come'. Indeed, the crown is already given to you. But you need to hold fast. How do you hold fast? We need to continuously stand on the Lord's side. We can try to understand what it means to stand on the Lord's side from the content of the seven letters. What does it mean to hold fast to the words of the Lord? Just like we just said there is not much to hold fast to when it is peaceful and stable. And it is very easy to say no matter what happens I will love the Lord. Brothers and sisters, it is easy for us just to say it. But it is not that easy in reality. When there is no trial, no temptation and no opposition, you can easily say those words. You need to know that when the seven letters were written, the church was in many different difficult situations. The seven letters can represent the seven different conditions of the church or the seven stages in the church history. No matter whether it was the condition or the stage, the church at that time was facing and suffering great difficulties. If the church was not under such situations, why would the Lord mention holding fast? Whenever 'hold fast' is mentioned, it means there were oppositions to what you expressed and rejection to your pursuit. Will you still stand on the Lord's side when you are in such situations?

In these seven letters, our Lord speaks the same thing to two different churches at two different times. Why did the Lord say that? I think a lot of believers have the wrong perception that once we believe in the Lord, everything will be smooth sailing till we see the Lord. Especially in recent times, the teachings of the prosperity theologies corrupt the hearts and minds of the children of God and hinder their pursuit of the Lord. Sometimes we do not think too much of all the oppositions presented to us. But in fact we should be careful. The Lord said 'hold fast'. Why do we need to hold fast? We see all the different types of oppositions and rebukes to our pursuit. It is hard for us to see the basis for their oppositions.

We also read two other verses apart from the verses we read in Revelation. One is in 1 Peter where it said 'the devil is as a roaring lion, walks about and seeks whom he may devour'. It is just like what Brother Kaung shared this morning about what Job went through. God works in us till we can reach perfection. Of course this is a good thing and we should rejoice in it. But Satan does not like it at all and all the time he seeks those whom he can devour. Who are the people

who can be devoured by Satan? We see that Job did not get devoured by Satan. Even though Job was not perfect, yet he was one who chose God. Because he persisted in choosing God, God gave him enough strength and mercy to sustain him through many fierce and terrible difficulties. Thus Satan could not devour Job because he did not have the qualifications to do so. If Satan chooses to focus on you or me, will we be devoured by him? We dare not say anything because we might be devoured by him.

Brothers and sisters please notice that Satan does not necessarily deal with us like a roaring lion. He also can use a pretty face to deal with us. How pretty can he be? He can be like an angel of light. Brothers and sisters, listen carefully. He masquerades as an angel of light. On the surface, he is like an angel of light. But what is he in reality? He is a roaring lion wearing the mask of the face of an angel. For we who decide to choose our Lord, Satan does not have any qualifications to hinder us from choosing our Lord. But he has many kinds of schemes to hinder us from continuing to choose the Lord. If we are alert in our spirit, there is no way he can make us forsake the Lord. But when he turns around and face us like an angel of light, we can easily be deceived by him. How does he deceive us? It is by tricking us into thinking we are following the Lord when in fact we are not following our Lord. On this point, remember when our Lord was on earth, He repeatedly reminded His disciples that many false prophets will arise and then there will be anti-Christ. And they will use many different great signs and wonders to mislead you. Therefore, be alert, hold fast to the reality of your position before God and the reality of your pursuit of God.

### Spiritual Warfare

I will now use some concrete examples to tell you how this spiritual warfare happens in our surroundings and the difficulties we encounter when we hold fast. It is easier for us to understand from the perspective of a roaring lion. If you live in an area which is governed by atheist, then it is easier to understand how Satan acts as a roaring lion.

Going back to the seven letters, our Lord said you need to hold fast. What is it that we need to hold fast? The Lord shows us clearly the content. First we need to hold fast the position of our Lord and also we need to hold fast to His words. Holding fast the position of the Lord and holding fast to His words are very similar. You will understand if I give you an example. The letters to the church in Ephesus and Sardis are about the Lord's position. The letters to the rest of

the churches are more about the word of God. As to the word of God, we can easily come into contact with. As to the position of our Lord, we might be able to feel it but not necessarily always do. Just like this afternoon when our brother shared, he mentioned some of what he encountered in the churches in America. You will ask why such things can happen. The churches bear the name of the Lord and on the surface they seem to be doing the Lord's work. And you ask what does that have to do with the position of our Lord? Their services in name seem to be for the Lord. But in fact, our Lord does not have any position in it.

When it comes to the word of God, it does not matter how many times we have read it. Rather, it matters how much we get from God's word and whether we follow His word. Maybe you have read God's word many times, but does God's word have any effect on you? When we first believe in the Lord two situations usually take place in us. Either we are slack in reading the word of God or we rush through reading the word of God. Brothers and sisters have to remember when God said we need to hold fast to His word, He does not mean how much of His word we know. In the Gospel of John, the Lord repeatedly mentioned one thing: you have to love the Lord. What is to love the Lord? We have a lot of definitions to 'love the Lord'. These include zeal to gather and being faithful to serve the Lord. But the meaning of 'love the Lord' should not be according to our own definition. We need to see how the Lord defines it. What did the Lord say? The Lord said 'if you love Me, you will keep My commandments'. Whoever keeps My words surely love Me. Our Lord told us these words three times. Thus to hold fast to the word of God does not mean how much of the word of God that we know. Rather it is how much we follow and keep His word. This is what the Lord means when He said we have to hold fast to what we have till He comes.

In 2 John, the Lord told us not to receive those who oppose God and those who are the false disciples. So how can the brothers and sisters who follow the Lord fellowship with those who put themselves into the body but reject the head? Did not the Lord remind us here that we need to hold fast to what we have? We need to hold fast to His word till He comes. We need to pay attention to what we are to hold fast to. We are not holding fast to work or to an activity. Rather we need to hold fast to a body which has a head and this head is our Lord Himself. Apart from our Lord, there is no other head. This is what the Lord looks for on earth. The Lord hopes that overcomers will stand up in every age and show that the Lord is the Head. Maybe you are a new believer for only two weeks. But if you confess that the Lord is the head, then you are an

overcomer. Maybe you believed in the Lord for ten or twenty years; you confessed the Lord is the Head and you are an overcomer. However, when some trials come and you reject the Lord as the Head, then you will not be an overcomer from that time onward. This is a very serious matter. When the Lord reminds us to hold fast, we can know that it is a very serious spiritual warfare and it touches the peak of the warfare. I will go only this far for this point.

### Angel of Light

Now we will look at what 'masquerading to be angel of light' means? There are numerous cases throughout the church history. We will just talk about the ones that we encounter nowadays.

Masquerading to be the angel of light are those that outwardly show you: I represent God; I am telling you what God's heart desire is. But in fact it is entirely not so. Particularly in recent years one that greatly impacted the church is the so called liberalism. They spoke the word of God but they do not speak the matters of God. Or I should put it more clearly. They speak of the bible but they do not speak the word of God and do not talk about the things of God. Thus they are called liberalism. Even today, this liberalism still affects the children of God. Even though their effect has weakened yet they still have not gone away.

Nowadays there is an organization which originated from China. It is comparably particular and new. It has a nice name to it: Lightning in the East. This Lightning in the East has affected many Christians in mainland China. As to the countries outside China, there was not much activity in the previous years. But in recent years, their activities have increased overseas. What do they teach? A lot of brothers and sisters heard this before. They said Christ has already come. But the Christ who came was not the Christ that came before. The one who came before was the Son of God so He was a male. But the one who is here now is female: a female christ. She is going to tell people how god is. God not only has a male image but he also has a female image. If it is just limited to this saying, we all know we should not accept this teaching. But we cannot come to this conclusion too fast. I would not mention the situation in China. But I want to talk about what they did overseas. Hong Kong was greatly affected by it and Australia and Europe are also greatly affected by it. And how bad is the influence in Hong Kong? An entire church turns to follow the Lightning in the East. In California in the United States, their activity started about two years ago and they came to our fellowship before. But we knew who they were when they came that time. So they never came back again. They came twice to our fellowship in San

Francisco. The brothers did not recognize them the first time. But when they came the second time, the brothers knew something was not right so they rejected them. Not only our two gatherings have come across them, but many Chinese gatherings in the Bay Area have come across them too.

The headquarters of the Lightning in the East is in New York in the United States. They have many literature publications and also a television station. In the recent two or three months, they have new activities in California. I do not know how many brothers and sisters have noticed this. They bought advertisements in the newspaper and use it to advertise and propagate their belief that christ has come the third time. I need to tell you what they preach is not vague like what I was just sharing. If you take note of what they publish in the newspaper, you will find that their wording is more spiritual than ours. Their use of spiritual words is more profound than ours. They have one theme: according to the eternal purpose of god, the age of grace has ended. This is now the start of the kingdom age. And how is the king manifested? The king is manifested as the female christ. But some time after the appearing of this female christ, the news from China was that she died. But from the television or internet, one can find the founder of the Lightning in the East now resides in New York and her last name is Chu. So you can see that this matter is not that simple.

They said the kingdom is already here. The king has already come. How was the kingdom revealed? They said in the grace period, god used grace to gather the people before him. Now the kingdom is here, god uses judgment to bring his people into the kingdom. You can see what they said is not so very different from what God has said. But in fact, there is a great difference between them. I will point them out to you. They said god works differently in each age. He used the law to work in the Old Testament time. And his work is according to grace in the New Testament time. God ended the Old Testament time when he used grace to do his work. The Old Testament became obsolete. In the grace period, just as how you cannot use anything from the Old Testament time, so now that the kingdom is here, you cannot use the things from the grace period or New Testament time. So what is the conclusion? You can no longer look to the Christ who was in the grace period and you can no longer use the Holy Bible that we use in the grace period. The grace period has already ended so instead we need to look to the female christ that already came to the earth. Since the death of this female christ, they change their name to Almighty God.

Brothers and sisters, if we do not pay attention to hold onto what we have as our Lord reminds us then how can we follow the Lord? There are always distractions just like the new idea that now you only need to follow the Almighty God because Christ and what Christ did on the cross was no longer effective. Thank the Lord that His word already reminded us that we should hold fast to what we have. He also told us already that there will be false prophets and false christ. We need to be watchful and do not be deceived by what they do and say. Brothers and sisters this is one of the reason why I mention the female christ. I am not asking you to go and try to know them. Rather I mention it because if one day you come across this kind of things in the States, then you will know how you are going to keep yourself in the Lord.

### Hold Fast to the Lord

The Lord said you need to hold fast onto what you already have. You need to follow what you already knew and understood, and stand firm in the Lord. We already looked at the prowling lion and also come to understand the masquerading angel of light. Now we have to look at how we can hold fast in this spiritual warfare. We do not need to do more research on these things. What we need to do is to ask how we can continue to stand firm in the Lord. It is not a matter of whether we are willing or not. We will come across these things. What we need now is to see how we can be victorious over our enemy? How can we not fall into their deceit? There is one more thing I need to mention about Lightning in the East. They hated the Apostle Paul the most in the New Testament. Why do they say we cannot read the New Testament anymore? It is because the grace period has passed. They said what Paul said about grace is totally unreasonable.

How can we stand firm in the Lord when we come across these things? In a spiritual battle if we need to be able to stand in the Lord, we need to return to look at the word of the Lord. And the Lord said you need to hold fast to my word.

First, brothers and sisters need to absorb well the word of the Lord. I already mentioned that it is not how many times you read the Bible. Rather, how much of the bible passages that you read take effect in you? I think many brothers and sisters feel troubled when they read the Book of Job. Today after Brother Kaung shared on Job, a brother in our discussion group mentioned that the way Brother Kaung shared on Job cleared up all his questions. When we read the book of Job, most of the time we do not understand what it is talking about. We feel bad if we do not read

it. But then when we read we do not understand it. But from Brother Kaung's sharing today, we know that God lead us to a point we recognize that the purpose of God's salvation is for us to gain the sonship. Brothers and sisters, this is a very good reminder. Yes, we do read the bible, but how much of what we retain have an effect on our life? Just now we shared what is to love the Lord. The Lord said keep my commandments. So to hold fast we need to know what the Lord said. We should ask ourselves what the things our Lord said have to do with us. This is a very practical need and requires us to put in the work ourselves. We do not say we have read it because we read every chapter. But we need to ask the Lord to help us know the purpose of His words when we read the Bible. We need to know why our Lord said those words. How does our Lord's words directly affect me? This is what we need to ask when we read the bible. We should not just keep the habit of reading the bible and then feel we have done our part. We need to bring the Lord's word into us and then follow His word accordingly. Then this is really acknowledging that the Lord is my Lord. Maybe you will say I cannot remember so many things in the bible. But God is gracious. Through the teaching of the anointing He will remind us what we have read. The words that we do not understand previously, He will cause us to understand. Whenever the teaching of the anointing inside us leads us, we have to follow. Brothers and sisters, this is holding fast to the word of God.

Look upon the Lord to help us follow Him in this way. We do not count the personal loss but strive to hold fast to living in the Lord. That is the lesson of the cross. Brothers and sisters might ask why God lead us to come across so much complicated problems. If we still remember the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, then we know that the Lord is leading us back to the Tree of Life and away from the harm of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

I still have a little bit more to add. Today our brother shared on the problems he saw in New York. It is about the Supreme Court ruling on same sex marriages. We all felt it especially the brothers and sisters in California, cause this ruling will cause a lot more problems later on. There was an incidence that happened after this ruling. There is a church which originally was set up for the purpose of changing the gay problem. But a day or so after this ruling, they placed an ad in the newspaper. The founder of the church issued a statement saying that they were wrong and they apologized to the gay organization. After I read this I asked myself, on what basis did the founder start this church? Brothers and sisters, you can see the work that Satan did in the end time shows up in different ways using different tactics. The Lord said hold fast onto what you

have till I come. May God be gracious to us and make us understand that apart from the Lord we have no other choices. It is because all that God wants to do, He already completed it through His Son. Also what God wants to proclaim He has clearly proclaimed already. If we are distracted by all these new things, then we need extra grace so we will not be disturbed by these new things. We need to remember that as long as it is today, we need to keep ourselves in Christ.

#### Prayer

Lord, we confess that we are all foolish. We cannot go forward without Your mercy. But we thank You because you have never short chained us of Your mercy. Lord we look to You. May Your spirit work among us so as to make us alert in Your light. And also lead us into Your word through Your Spirit. Use Your word to guide us on the road ahead of us. We wish that none of us will feel that our crown has been taken away when we see Your face. We thank our Lord. You reminded us that we need to pay attention to our crown. We ask You to not only let us know of this fact but keep us living in this pursuit. Thank our Lord. Please listen to our prayer. In Jesus Christ name we pray. Amen.