

WCCC 1990

Brother Kaung

What the Spirit Says to the Church (2)

Revelation 2: 8 – 17

And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These things says the first and the last, who became dead, and lived: I know thy tribulation and thy poverty; but thou are rich; and the railing of those who say that they themselves are Jews, and are not, but a synagogue of Satan. Fear nothing of what thou are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give to thee the crown of life. He that has an ear, let Him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies. He that overcomes shall in no wise be injured of the second death. And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write: these things says He that has the sharp two-edged sword: I know where thou dwell, where the throne of Satan is; and thou hold fast my name, and have not denied my faith, even in the days in which Antipas my faithful witness was, who was slain among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against thee: that thou have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a snare before the sons of Israel, to eat of idol sacrifices and commit fornication. So thou also have those who hold the doctrine of Nicolaitans in like manner. Repent therefor: but if not, I come to thee quickly, and I will make war with them with the sword of my mouth. He that has an ear, let Him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies. To Him that overcomes, to Him will give of the hidden manna; and I will give to Him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written, which no one knows but He that receives it.

Prayer:

Our Lord and our God, we thank you and praise you because we have read your words. We now ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten these words in us. And we ask that you speak to us again so that we can really hear in the inside and that we can return to you. Our Lord, we are willing to exalt you here tonight. Because you are the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Your glory fills the whole earth. In the name of the Lord, Jesus. Amen.

During these few days, we are going to look at the topic 'What the Spirit says to the church' together. The apostle John was exiled to the island of Patmos.

On the Lord's Day, he was in the Holy Spirit. He heard a voice from behind him, the sound as of a trumpet. When he turned to look, he saw a vision. He saw seven golden lampstands and one like the Son of Man among the lampstands. Based on this vision, there came the seven letters.

These seven letters were written to the seven churches in Asia. We know at that time in Asia, there were not only just seven churches like that at Ephesus and Smyrna. There were more than seven churches. We know that the church at Colossae was also in Asia. But we see that this church was not included in the seven letters. We see that the Holy Spirit chose these seven churches because these seven churches represented the conditions of all the churches throughout the ages. So we can say that the seven letters are written to the entire church on earth. What the Spirit says to Ephesus was not only to Ephesus, not only to Smyrna, not only to Pergamos, not only to Thyatira, not only to Sardis, not only to Philadelphia and not only to Laodicea. Although he wrote these letters to the seven churches and that each had their own characteristics, yet at the end of each letter, it wrote 'what the Spirit says to the assemblies'. So we know all the words were spoken to all the churches. The words were not only spoken to the church at the end of the first century but also to the church at the end of the twentieth century.

The reason the Holy Spirit can speak because the Lord is in the midst of the church. If the Lord is not in the midst of the church, the Holy Spirit cannot speak and has no words to speak. We thank and praise the Lord. Although five of these seven churches disappointed our Lord, yet our Lord is still walking among the churches and still speaking to the churches. He hopes that the church will return to Him. If the churches continue to disobey Him, then He will remove the lampstand. Then there will not be any words at that time. And the Lord will not reveal Himself at that time. The presence of the Lord would have left. Although the churches on earth can continue on, yet before God they no longer exist. A church is a church because of the presence of the Lord. The Lord said, as long as there are two or three gathered in my name, I shall be in the midst. So the presence of the Lord is the basis that it is a church. The presence of the Lord is the meaning of the church. Only with His presence will there be words from the Holy Spirit. We thank and praise our Lord. He indeed is a very patient Lord. He is still walking among the churches. So today we still have the chance to hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Last night we already talked about the first letter – a letter that the Lord wrote to the church in Ephesus. Although there were many good points in the church at Ephesus, yet the Lord said, I oppose you. It was because the Lord could not find Himself in that church. In the church at Ephesus, the saints left their first love. God is love. Our Lord is love. He loves us and gave Himself up for us. If the church has lost the first love, that is, that perfect, pure, selfless, enduring and believing love, as far as the Lord is concerned, He has already lost that

church. Thus the Lord said, you have to remember where you fell. You have to repent and do the first works.

Dear brothers and sisters, last night we already mentioned that this first love is very easy to lose. As far as the church is concerned, as far as an individual is concerned, unknowingly we can easily lose the first love. Every day, we need to go before our Lord, and ask Him to enlighten us and let us see whether there are any evil thoughts inside. We need to see whether our hearts are pure towards Him and whether we love our Lord with that perfect love. Do we love Him for Himself, and not the blessings that He gives us? Do we love Him to such an extent that we can say as Job said, even if He kills me, I will still love him? We need to come before our Lord daily for Him to examine our heart because if we are not careful, it is very easy for us to lose the first love. We may not even know that we have lost that first love. So we need to come before the Lord, and ask Him to examine us so that we can repent before Him every day. And we offer up our perfect love to our perfect Lord. This is what we have shared last night.

This evening we will share on two churches because there is a connection between these two letters. There is one thing I need to talk about before we speak on these two letters. Here it said what the Spirit says to the churches, he who has an ear, let him hear. The Spirit indeed is there speaking. Because the Lord loves the church, so the Spirit continues to speak. The difficulty is in us who hear. Here it says who has an ear, let him hear. We know today we are in the end times. It was about 60 A.D. or maybe around 67 A.D when Paul wrote the last letter that is, II Timothy. He said in II Timothy 4: 3 – 4 *‘For the time shall be when they will not bear sound teaching; but according to their own lusts will heap up to themselves teachers, having an itching ear, and they will turn away their ear from the truth, and will have turned aside to fables’*. ‘The time has come.....having an itching ear’ means that because your ear itches and you just want to listen to the words that you like. You do not want to listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. You want to hear what your lusts want to hear. And because you want to listen to those words, there arose many teachers. They will say something that pleases you so that you feel comfortable when you listen to them. And your ear is tired and will not listen to the truth. You like to listen to fables. Dear brothers and sisters, we are already in this condition today. It is not that the Spirit does not speak. It is because our ear does not want to listen to what the Spirit says. Our ear wants to hear what our flesh likes. So many teachers rose up to satisfy our itching ear.

When our Lord was on earth, He also said something in Matthew 13. We know that our Lord spoke when He was on earth. But some people opposed our Lord. They were not willing to listen to our Lord. Instead, they blasphemed the Holy Spirit. So from that time onwards, our Lord started to use parables instead of speaking explicitly to the people. The disciples came and asked the Lord why He used parables to talk to the people. And in Matthew 13: 14 – 15, He explained to the disciples why He used parables. Matthew 13: 14 – 15 says *‘and in them*

is filled up the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, hearing you shall hear and shall not understand, and beholding you shall behold and not see; for the heart of this people has grown fat, and they have heard heavily with their ears, and they have closed their eyes as asleep, lest they should see with the eyes, and hear with the ears, and understand with the heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them'. Here we see there was a group of people who listened but could not hear. They looked but could not see. And in their heart, they could not understand. The reason is that their heart had grown fat. Their ears were heavy and their eyes were closed. So even you have spoken but they did not hear. There was a problem with their heart and because of that there was a problem with their ears. Some have their hearts entangled with money and worries of this world. So when the Holy Spirit speaks they could not hear.

Dear brothers and sisters, our ear is very important and has a lot to do with hearing. Does our ear like to hear the words of the Holy Spirit? Is our ear willing to listen to the words of the Holy Spirit? And how is our heart? If our heart is against our Lord, even if we have ears, we will not listen. So we need to come before our Lord, and ask Him to examine our heart. We ask Him to see our thoughts and to see whether there are hindrances in our hearts and whether our hearts are towards the Lord. When our hearts turn towards the Lord, the veil on our face will be taken away. Our ears and our eyes are opened. Then our hearts can understand.

Brothers and sisters, we need to have an ear to listen to our Lord. Some said this is very interesting, because in here it said, whoever have an ear, let him hear. In the original language, the word 'ear' is singular. We all have two ears. But the bible said only one ear. It is not that one ear in and out the other ear. You only have one ear to listen to the word of the Lord. In the Old Testament when there was a Hebrew bond servant who had served the master for six years, according to the law when the six years were up, he could freely leave the master. But here was a slave who said I love my master and I love his house. I do not want to be free. I want to be his bondservant my entire life. The master then would bring the slave to the door and his ear was pierced, and then he would be the slave throughout his life. This time our brother Lance told us that maybe we would not understand what the pierced ear really means. According to the tradition of the Jews, the pierced ear was not the end, cause the hole would close up again. Thus when the ear was pierced, an earring will be put into the pierced ear. And for a man, if you see that he had an earring, then you know he was a bondservant for life. Pierced ear means a bondservant of love for life. Previously he was a bondservant out of duty. But now he became a bondservant out of love.

So we see we need to have a pierced ear. Psalm 40 is a Messianic Psalm. It prophesized the condition when our Lord came to the world. It said, you pierced my ear. I come to do thy will. And this is our Lord. In Isaiah 50, it has the same words. It says every morning you wake up my ear. As if my ear was asleep but every morning you wake up my ear. You open my ear. Brothers and sisters,

today before God, if we want to hear what the Holy Spirit says to the churches, we need to pierce our ear out of love for our Lord. Then we can hear His voice and obey His will. As our brother said in the afternoon, not only do we have to listen, we also need to keep. But if you do not have a pierced ear, you cannot even hear. And even if you heard it, you will not keep it. Every time when we are going to listen to what the Spirit says to the churches, we need to ask the Lord to open our ears. We ask that our Lord wakes up our ears so that we can truly hear. This is our prayer before our God. Otherwise, whatever we talk about is vanity of vanity. Even if it is the words of the Holy Spirit, it still will be all in vain. So we ask God to be merciful to us.

Now we want to look at these two letters. Here it says, you have to write to the church in Smyrna. We know that this word Smyrna comes from the word 'myrrh'. Myrrh in the bible refers to bitterness and death. We remember when our Lord was born, the wise men from the east came to worship Him. They brought gold, frankincense and myrrh and offered these to the Lord. These things have the meaning of representation. Gold represents the nature of God. Whenever the bible talks about gold, it refers to the glory of God. Although our Lord was born as a baby in Bethlehem, yet He is in existence from the beginning. He is God. And this is what gold represents. Frankincense represents life. His life is like the fragrance of the incense. Frankincense means the fragrance is very aromatic. The whole life of our Lord on earth was like frankincense. The myrrh represents his death. Myrrh is bitter. It represents the death of our Lord and how He tasted the bitterness of death for us. So the church in Smyrna was a suffering church.

We know the book of Revelation is a book of prophecy. We can look at these seven letters in a historical sense. There were these seven churches in Asia at the end of the first century. We can also look at them from a prophetic standpoint. Ephesus was a church at the end of the apostolic time, that is, at the end of the first century. The church at Smyrna in a prophetic sense represented the church in the second and third century, because in the second and third century, God's church went through great persecutions. The Roman Empire persecuted the church severely. A great number of Christians were martyred. So it was a suffering church. We know at that time there was a bishop in Smyrna by the name of Polycarp. He was pretty old and he was taken captive. The governor saw that he was advanced in age and had pity on him. The governor told him, you only needed to deny what you believed in. And what did Polycarp say? He said I have served my Lord for eighty-six years. The Lord was never loose on me. How can I deny Him at this point? Then the governor said, you do not need to deny. You just need to burn an incense. Polycarp said I cannot do it. Eventually he was martyred. During the second and third centuries, a great many Christians were persecuted for the name of the Lord. So the Lord said, you have to be faithful unto death.

Dear brothers and sisters, not only do the churches in the second and third centuries have to suffer. Not only did the church at Smyrna had to suffer. The church at Smyrna represented all churches. The church has to suffer, because the Head of the church is a suffering Lord. How can it be that the Lord whom we believe in suffered but then today His church can enjoy? If our Lord walked the way of the cross and was crucified on the cross, how can His church today sit on the throne? If the church did not suffer, this church has already lost his nature. Dear brothers and sisters, do not think that after one believes in the Lord, the suffering has passed. We all have some kind of a welfare thought. We said, now that we have believed in the Lord, we can now hope for great blessings. Today in the United States, the prosperity gospel is very prevalent. People said to us, if you believe in the Lord, whatever you ask, you will get it. You do not need to drive a Chevrolet; you can ask the Lord for a Cadillac. This is something that you can get. Dear brothers and sisters, today in man's mind, everything will go smoothly after one believed in the Lord. And then we can have great enjoyments.

But the bible tells us, our Lord is a suffering Lord. If we are to follow our Lord, we must walk the way of the cross. We need to carry our cross and follow the Lord. Today, if we are already sitting on the throne, then we have lost our nature. 'Today you already reigned as kings without us. (I Corinthians 4: 8) Today we are made a spectacle in the world. (I Corinthians 4:9)' This is what Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, because the church at Corinth has lost its way. Dear brothers and sisters, if it is the church, then there will be sufferings. If we are Christians then we have to suffer. It is not that we go find sufferings. But because we follow the Lord, because we are faithful to our Lord, we have to go through a lot of difficulties. We remember Paul and Barnabas were preaching the gospel in Galatia and other places. They also set up churches. On their way back, they said to the brothers, you have to hold fast to your faith. You have to go through a lot of sufferings entering into the kingdom of God.

Brothers and sisters, today if we are Christians and we do not have sufferings, it will be a strange thing. I Peter 4:12 – 14 said, *'Beloved, take not as strange the fire of persecution which has taken place among you for your trial, as if a strange thing was happening to you; but as you have shared in the sufferings of Christ, rejoice, that in the revelation of His glory also you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reproached in the name of Christ, blessed are you; for the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God rests upon you.'* Today, if the Christians are tested, it is a normal thing. And if we are put to shame for the sake of the name of Christ, this is a blessed thing. The glory of the Spirit of God is upon us. Why is it that Christians cannot get away from sufferings? It is because our Lord called us out from this world. Although we are in this world, yet we do not belong to this world. We are just strangers and sojourners in this world. Since we are strangers and sojourners in this world, we will suffer much persecutions. And this is not a strange thing. Today if we do not have sufferings, then we should feel strange. Why is the world so good to us? The world nailed our Lord to the cross. But

then they put us on the throne? Is it because we are friends with the world? If man loves the world and the things of the world, the love of the Father will not be in them anymore.

So brothers and sisters, the church is a suffering church. We should have a mind for sufferings. We should have the mind for sufferings as our armor. What is the mind to suffer? The mind to suffer is that we have in us a determination to suffer. We are willing to suffer with our Lord because He has suffered. If we have this mind for sufferings, this will be our armor. And when sufferings come, then we can oppose the scheme of our enemies. If we do not have this mind of sufferings, then when the sufferings come, we will fall. Dear brothers and sisters, today we live in the United States, a so-called Christian country. It seems that we do not have persecutions from the world. Even so, we cannot be without the mind for sufferings. Inside us, we still have to have this mind for sufferings. If you have this mind for sufferings, it will not be that you do not have sufferings. If you are faithful to follow the Lord's words, you will come across a lot of afflictions.

But remember, let us not have a feeling of persecution complex. Do not have the psychology of being persecuted. There is a cult where people make you have to have a psychology of being persecuted. So when they are persecuted on the outside, they will feel more strength inside them. And they hope people will come and persecute them. Brothers and sisters, we should not have this sense of persecution complex. But we need to have the mind for sufferings because our Lord is a suffering Lord.

When the Christians in the church of Smyrna were going through sufferings, the thing that made them suffer the most was what is said here, '*and the railings of those who said themselves are Jews but in reality, are not, but the synagogue of Satan*' (verse 9). The Jews are the chosen people of God. Their synagogues are places where they worshipped God. But then here it said that they are slandered by the Jews. And these people were the members of the synagogue of Satan. If you read the book of Acts, at the time the church was being persecuted, the first ones who persecuted them was not the Roman Empire nor were the Gentiles but the Jews. You see that wherever Paul went, the Jews incited the Gentiles there to oppose Paul. So it was the Jews who led the people to oppose the church of God. Originally, they were God's chosen. The covenant of God was among them. Their synagogues were places of worship of God. But then they became the leaders of those who persecute God's church. And this gave the church more severe sufferings than the world gave to the church.

What did Paul say in the book of Romans? He said those who are outward Jews are not real Jews. Only the inward Jews are the real Jews. Outside circumcision is not real circumcision. Only inward circumcision is real. It is according to the Spirit and not to the letter. This is in the second chapter of Romans. In chapter 9 he said again, not all the Israelites are real Israelites. Do not think that you are Abraham's descendants and you are the chosen people of

God. Only those who are born of the promise are the chosen. These Jews in the church at Smyrna outwardly were Jews and they were chosen people of God and the synagogue was the place to worship God. But from the standpoint of spiritual reality, they could not be counted as Jews. The synagogue was the synagogue of Satan and was used by Satan to persecute the church of God.

We see that it is like this throughout the generations in history. We know the sufferings that the church has gone through from generations to generations. The persecutions were not just from the world but more severely they came from the religious world. The Roman Empire persecuted the Christians only for two centuries. But the Roman Catholic church persecuted Christians for hundreds of centuries. Dear brothers and sisters, we see here that a thing, even if it comes from God, can turn into a system. Originally their faith was a living faith. Now it is only a creed. Originally, they were a chosen people whom God made a covenant with, but now they became a vessel for Satan. What they did on the outside does not count. Only what they did on the inside is real. Not according to letter, but according to the spirit. When the Spirit is gone, what remains will be the letter. It became an organization.

Brothers and sisters, whenever a living thing became an organization, what they fear most is the living thing. The thing that an organization feared most is the organism. And because the thing has become an organization, it is already set. It has security inside and it can go on like this. But when it comes across a living thing, a life, it knows the new wine needs to burst through the old wineskin. So in order to preserve the old wineskin, it has to oppose the new wine. It opposes anything that comes out of the Spirit. Brothers and sisters, this has been going on for ages. Not only the Roman Catholics are like this. Even the protestants are like this. Martin Luther and Calvin rose up to reform the inside. But you cannot change a living thing which has turned into a system. You did it out of the goodness of your heart. But it considered you as an enemy. So Martin, Calvin and others had to come out from the Roman Catholics. But after a certain period of time, no matter whether they are the Lutherans or the reformed church they also turned into a pattern. They became a set organization. They became a system. They now rose up to persecute those who faithfully follow the Lord. If you read the history of the church, you know that they have killed many of those who are faithful and who love the Lord.

Then there is another group of people who think that the reformation is not thorough. They wanted to follow the Lord faithfully to the end. These people were then considered as trouble makers. And many were killed. Now these were slowly coming out because those who wrote down these happenings were all killed. But there was a group called Anabaptists – those who were baptized again. They said in the bible it said one is baptized according to faith. And not that once you were born you got sprinkled and you then become a member of the Lutheran. And they said the bible said we have to be baptized according to faith. So the reformists called them Anabaptists. They said, ok you want to be baptized?

So they tied a rock to the Anabaptists' necks and threw them into the river. Women and children were also thrown into the water and drowned. We have seen these kinds of stories throughout the generations. They also used slanders to kill many. These came not from the world, but from the religious world. Religion is an awful thing. So at that time many were persecuted by the Jews.

It is the same today. If you were to follow the Lord faithfully, you will find that not only will the world oppose you, but the religious world also opposes you. It cannot but oppose you because you are threatening their survival. The Lord said, be faithful unto death. What does it mean to be faithful and where does faithfulness come from? If you read the Greek, you see that faithfulness is related to faith. These two words are very close. Faith is 'Pistis'. Faithfulness is 'Pistos'. These two words are extremely close because faithfulness comes out from faith.

What is faith? In the bible, faith encompasses three meanings. The word 'faith' contains three levels of meaning. The first level is that inside of you there is a firm conviction. You acknowledge what God has revealed is the truth. The second meaning is that because you have such conviction, you have a personal surrender to the Lord. The third level of meaning is that because of this surrendering to the Lord, it results in a certain conduct and this conduct is faithfulness. You believe in Him, you trust Him, you follow Him, and you are faithful to Him unto death. So brothers and sisters, faithfulness comes from faith.

What is our faith today? What is it that we believe in? For example, when the Lord wrote to the church in Smyrna, He introduced Himself 'the first and the last, the one who died and has resurrected'. What they believed in is such a Lord. And what a Lord is this Lord? and what is the truth that is revealed? Our Lord is the first. He is the beginning of all things. He is the source of all things. Whatever that does not come out from Him is not. Only those that come from Him are. If it is not His, it is not. If it is His, then it is. He is the last. Everything will return back to Him. If it is not back to Him, then it is not. All things will be summed up in Christ because all things come from Him. And all things will be summed up in Him. This is the kind of Lord they believe in. To sum it up, it means the Lord they believe in is Lord of all. And this is the church. The church is the body of Christ, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. In the church, Christ is all and in all. He is the beginning and He is the end. This is the testimony of the church. This is the faith of the church.

Here in the Book of Revelation, Jesus said He was dead but now He is alive. Originally He is God and God cannot die. But because He loves us, He came to this earth and became a man. He tasted death for all of us. But death cannot confine Him. He resurrected from death. He is the risen Lord. This is the Lord that they have faith in. If you believe in such a Lord, you are faithful to this Lord. And because you are faithful to this Lord, you deny anything that does not come from this Lord. Whatever comes out of Him, it should be summed up in Him.

Even though it has to pass through death, yet you know there is the resurrection. And that is why you can be faithful unto death.

Dear brothers and sisters, today are we faithful unto death? Maybe we should not even say 'are we faithful unto death'. Rather, today before the Lord, are we faithful to Him? Oftentimes, we are faithful to a system. I remember when I first believe in the Lord, I was a baby in the Lord. Thank the Lord, I am still a baby but I hope I can grow up. A brother came to me and said he had a fellowship with a sister. And he discovered one thing. And that was when he blasphemed against God, she did not argue with him. But if he touched her organization, then she would fight. You see, we can be faithful. But what is it that we are faithful to? Are we faithful to a system or a cause or a doctrine or a person or are we faithful to our Lord? Dear brothers and sisters, today we see that many people can be faithful to a system unto death. And some can rise up and fight for a system that they are faithful to. And some can forsake all things to be faithful to a person. They can be faithful to a man but not faithful to the Lord.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Lord said you have to be faithful to me. And you have to be faithful unto death. If you are faithful to the Lord, you will have sufferings. And the sufferings will be coming from the world. Thank the Lord that after the second and the third century, the Roman Empire could not destroy the church. But the Roman Empire itself was destroyed. Even though there were great persecutions, yet the church became more thriving. The blood of the martyrs was like seeds, bringing much fruits. So Satan changed his plan. He knew that persecutions were in vain. So he changed the course and disguised himself as an angel and wanted to help the church. Thus in the fourth century, we know that Constantine became the emperor of Rome. He became a friend of the church. He became a protector of the church. And he became the head of the church. He became the head of the mystics – a hidden religion. And he was also the head of Christianity. You see that Satan changed his course. But thank the Lord at that time in the beginning, there were still some who were faithful to the Lord.

Then we come to the church at Pergamos. Pergamos referred to the condition of the church from the fourth to the sixth century. At the beginning, there were faithful Christians. What did the Lord say? He said, *'I know where you dwell, where the throne of Satan is; and you hold fast my name, and have not denied my faith, even in the days in which Antipas my faithful witness was, who was slain among you, where Satan dwells'* (Revelation 2: 13). In the church history, we cannot find a person by the name of Antipas. So we know this is again symbolic. It has a symbolic meaning and there was not a person whose name was Antipas. But there were people who were Antipas kind of person. These people are faithful to the Lord. When all those in the surroundings were not faithful, a group of people were still faithful to the Lord. These were the witnesses of the Lord. Their name was Antipas. Antipas in the Greek original is made up of two words. Anti is against. Pas means all things. In other words, in the opinion of men, this

group of people were against all things. Why did they go against all things? It is because they kept the word and did not deny the name of the Lord. They kept the word of the Lord. They did not stray from the word of the Lord. They did not compromise with the world. They did not water down the word of God. They were against the tide and they had kept the word of God. And they did not deny the name of the Lord. They acknowledged the name of the Lord is their name. It was enough just to have the name of the Lord. They called themselves Christians. They belong to Christ. Although people called them by many nicknames. But they said we were but Christians. They submitted under the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ. They followed Christ. Christ was their life. Christ was their all.

Do you know where the name 'Christian' comes from? If you read the book of Acts, you know at that time, the people in the world did not know how to describe the disciples of the Lord. That is, those who believe in the Lord Jesus. Some said they were people of the way because they walked in this way. People did not know how to call them. The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. They did not call themselves Christians. At that time being called Christian was a nickname – with despise. You, a group of people, obsessed with Christ. You opened your mouth with Christ and you ended your conversation with Christ. You lived for Christ. All things were for Christ. You did not have anything except Christ. You were people who were called Christians. Dear brothers and sisters, they kept firmly the name of the Lord. They forsook everything for this reason. Whatever was not from the Lord, whatever was not of the truth, they would oppose. For this reason, they were martyred. Do you know the word martyr and the word witness in the original language are one word? If you want to be a faithful witness, you are either martyred to death or being martyred in life. You have to be faithful unto death.

Dear brothers and sisters, today we see that the condition of the church is changing. In the church today, some have accepted the teaching of Balaam. What is the teaching of Balaam? In the book of Numbers, the Lord's people were brought to the edge of the land of Moab, and they were on the east side of Jordan, ready to go into Canaan. At that time the king of Moab, Balak was nervous. He invited a gentile priest by the name of Balaam to go curse the Israelites. And even though God did not allow him to go, yet for the love of money, he asked God again whether he could go or not. The Lord said, you go. But you need to be careful what to say. So when he was prophesizing, he kept blessing the Israelites time after time. He could not but bless them. In the end he could not get the money. He knew the way of God. So he told king Balak there was only one way that you could defeat these people. And that was to entice them to worship idols, and to marry the women of Moab. And to lead them to eat of the food sacrificed to the idols. Balaam knew God is holy and righteous. When God's people became unholy and unrighteous, then God has to judge them. You see here that he sold the truth of God for his own benefit. The Israelites did get enticed that time and twenty thousand people died.

Dear brothers and sisters, this is the doctrine of Balaam. Balaam for his own benefit, united with the doctrine of the world. You do not have to separate yourself. Why do you have to be that kind of people? You only compromise a little, and you will not have persecutions. And then you will be welcomed. Is not that good? Dear brothers and sisters, today when we look at the condition of the church, it has been obedient to the doctrine of Balaam. The world has come into the church. Our brother Watchman Nee once said, the boat is on the surface of the water. But when the water comes into the boat, it will sink. The church is on this big ocean. If the water comes into the church, the church will sink. Dear brothers and sisters, this is the condition of the church today. The truth of God is compromised. It becomes united with the world. It uses the method of the world to attract people. And the church was managed like managing a big corporation. We see this is taking in the doctrine of Balaam. If you are Antipas, you have to be against all these things.

And not only this, some also embraced the teaching of the Nicolaitans. In the letter to the church in Ephesus, there were only the words of the Nicolaitans. But now here in the letter to the church in Pergamos, it said there were people who exhibited the deeds of the Nicolaitans. When there were just the words, it had not yet turned into a doctrine. But when the deeds turned into a doctrine, then the doctrine ruled everything. Here the deeds became a doctrine. And there started the system of laity and clergy. A group became clergy and they took control of all spiritual things. All the others were laymen. You just come to the meeting. You just come to listen to the messages. You just give some donations. It is good that you should not have an opinion. Better if you just come but you do not want to come. Do not get too deep or else you will make trouble. You do not know or understand. We in the group are the ones who are experts. Let the experts manage the spiritual things. And this became a doctrine. And this doctrine was popularized throughout the Christian world.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Lord said, you need to repent. The Lord is one whose mouth is like a two-edged sword. The Lord is going to use the words from His mouth to pierce and to divide the soul and the spirit. It will divide what is of Him and what is of man; what is of Him and what is of the world. What is Himself and what is not Himself. Whatever is not of Him has to be taken out. Whatever is of Him has to remain.

What is the Lord looking for in these two churches? He is looking for those who are faithful unto death. It is faithful unto death to Him and not to other things, because He is a Lord who is faithful unto death. Our Lord is faithful unto death to His Father. His name is Faithful. When you read Revelation, you will know that Faithful is His name. Today the name of us Christians should also be faithful. We should be faithful to our Lord. Dear brothers and sisters, today you should separate out yourself and not unite with the world. Today we should separate from whatever we are united with. And then we will be on the right path. The Lord today is looking for Himself in the church. He is looking for

those who are faithful unto death. We hope the Lord have mercy on us. We have many things that we should repent of, because a lot is not of the Lord. They are things outside of the Lord. We are faithful to the wrong things. Let us repent and be faithful to our Lord. Only then will we have the testimony of the church.

Let us pray.

Our Lord, we prostrate before you. We ask you to shine your light upon us. We ask you to use the two-edged sword in your mouth to pierce and to separate. Whatever that is not in you inside us, we ask you to take them out. Lord, please enlighten us. We acknowledge that in the past, we think we are always faithful. But what we have been faithful to are people, system and things. We were not faithful to you. Lord, please forgive us. We ask you to open our eyes and our ears, so that we can understand in our heart. Only you are worthy for us to be faithful unto death. And only you are the one whom we should be faithful unto death. You are faithful unto death to your Father. Lord, we want to be faithful to you all our life. We know by ourselves, we cannot. But we know whom we have believed. And we know that you will keep what we have entrusted to you until that day. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.