

WCCC 1990

Brother Kaung

What the Spirit Says to the Church (3)

Revelation 2: 18 – 3: 6 And to the angel of the assembly in Thyatira write: these things says the Son of God, He that has His eyes as a flame of fire, and His feet are like fine brass: I know thy works, and love, and faith, and service, and thine endurance, and thy last works to be more than the first. But I have against thee that thou permit the woman Jezebel, she who calls herself prophetess, and she teaches and leads astray my servants to commit fornication and eat of idol sacrifices. And I gave her time that she should repent, and she will not repent of her fornication. Behold, I cast her into a bed, and those that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, and her children will I kill with death; and all the assemblies shall know that I am He that searches the reins and the hearts; and I will give to you each according to your works. But to you I say, the rest who are in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I do not cast upon you any other burden; but what ye have hold fast till I shall come. And he that overcomes, and he that keeps unto the end my works, to him will I give authority over the nations, and he shall shepherd them with an iron rod; as vessels of pottery are they broken in pieces, as I also have received from my Father; and I will give to him the morning star. He that has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the assemblies.

And to the angel of the assembly in Sardis write; these things said He that has the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars: I know thy works, that thou have a name that thou live and are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, which are about to die, for I have not found thy works complete before my God. Remember therefore how thou have received and heard, and keep it and repent. If therefore thou shall not watch, I will come upon thee as a thief, and thou shall not know at what hour I shall come upon thee. But thou have a few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, because they are worthy. He that overcomes, he shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life, and will confess his name before my Father and before His angels. He that has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the assemblies.

Prayer:

Lord, we have to prostrate before you from our heart. We thank you and praise you because you are the Lord who walks among the churches. We thank and praise you because your Spirit is still speaking to the churches. We ask you to pierce our ears so that we can hear your voice, and respond to your words.

We hope your words will pour into our hearts and make us return to you. This morning we look unto you. You know the condition of each one of us before you. You also know what is hindering us from you. We ask you to take away the veil in our face, so that each of us can come face to face with you, and be transformed according to your image to satisfy your heart. Lord, we only have one desire. We wish your heart will be satisfied. We want you to be pleased with your people. We desire your glory to appear. Lord, we ask that you let us see your glory. We worship you. We pray in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The seven letters in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 are the seven letters that our Lord wrote to the churches in Asia at the end of the first century. Although it was the end of the first century, yet we can see from the seven letters that there were many conditions with the churches that could not satisfy the heart of our Lord. Even though it was like that, yet our Lord still walked among the seven lampstands. He spoke. He worked the work of recovery. He hoped that these churches would return back to His heart's desire. In another word, The Lord wanted to bring the churches back to the vision seen in the first chapter.

In the first chapter, we see our Lord appeared to John. We call it the vision of the Patmos Island. There we see the seven churches. But there is no description of these seven lampstands in the first chapter. The descriptions are in chapters two and three. But we see in the first chapter that there is a very detailed description of one like the Son of Man among the lampstands. Here John saw this Lord. And then in the second and third chapters, at the beginning of each letter, it starts with depicting one aspect of the risen Lord. Then each letter is written according to that particular part of the vision. In another word, our Lord measures each church according to Himself. He evaluated them according to Himself to see if they are measured up to Him. If they are consistent with Him, then He is satisfied. And then the testimony of this church will be complete. But if the condition of the church is not consistent with Him, the Lord then call them to repent. What does 'to repent' mean? To repent means to return back to the vision of the Lord. Where does 'repent' return back to?

Brothers and sisters, we know today towards the end of the twentieth century, our Lord is about to return. In fact, He already stands at the door. We see the recovery work of the Lord is more intense. The Lord still works among the churches. Regardless of how our condition is today, He has not forsaken us. He still uses Himself to measure us. But we have to admit, when He uses Himself to measure us, we find that there are so many things in us that are not like Him. We have gone astray in many things. In a lot of things, we only have the outward appearance but no inward reality. We admit we have saddened the heart of our Lord a lot more than in the first century. But we thank and praise the Lord, He has not forsaken us. He is still there calling us. He wants us to recover and return to Him. To recover is not to recover a doctrine nor a system. But He wants us to recover and return back to Himself.

Indeed, in the process of recovery, the truth needs to be recovered and the way has to be restored. The truth and the way recovered are not just a truth and a way. The recovered truth and way are our Lord Himself. He is the truth and He is the way. If we said we discovered a truth and we have not met our Lord, then this is not a recovery. If we said we have found a way, but if this way is not the Lord Himself, then this way is not a recovery. Yes, when the Lord does the work of recovery, He restores us back to the truth; and He restores us back to His way. But brothers and sisters, please remember, no matter it is truth or the way, it is not things outside of the Lord. It has to be the Lord Himself. And thus, you see it is living. God wants to recover us back to His Son whether it is an individual or a church. He will work until the Son can be reflected either in an individual or a church. And this is the work of recovery of God on this earth.

We see in the first letter the recovery work that God needs to do is to recover the first love. This is to love our God with our whole heart, our whole mind and our whole will because this is how He loves us. It is only when we love Him this way, His glory can be manifested. If a man really whole heartedly loves God, and forgets everything else and just loves God, then this is a person that God knows. Knowledge puffs up but love edifies. If one loves God, this one is known by God. And the glory of God will be on this person. It is so either with an individual or a church. If there is someone in the church that loves God with an excellent love, then we can see that the glory of God is upon that church because He is satisfied and overjoyed.

In the second and third letter, we see that what God wants to recover is being faithful unto death. He wants us to be faithful like Him. Today there are not many who are faithful. Even if we can find faithful people, we see that they are not faithful to the Lord. Our God is faithful. Our Lord is a faithful Lord. He is faithful to His Father unto death. Now the Lord asks His church to be faithful unto death like Him. That way, His glory will be manifested.

This morning we will look at the fourth and fifth letters. These are the two letters the Lord wrote to the church at Thyatira and at Sardis. I want brothers and sisters to look at two verses. II Corinthians 1: 12 *'For our boasting is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and sincerity before God, (not in fleshly wisdom but in God's grace,) we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly towards you'*. I want brothers and sisters to pay attention to these few words 'according to God's holiness' in the Chinese translation. But I feel that it is closer to the original meaning in Darby's translation. Of course, the meaning of holiness is in there. Here it said 'that in simplicity and sincerity before God'. If you translated it this way, it seems to be closer to the meaning. Simplicity means purity. Sincerity means true and honest. And in the original language it not only said, 'before God I have this condition' but it also said 'according to God's simplicity and sincerity'. The simplicity and sincerity of God has become my simplicity and sincerity towards Him. Let us turn to II Corinthians 11: 3 *'But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve by*

his craft, so your thoughts should be corrupted from simplicity as to the Christ'. Here it says the simplicity towards Christ. So when we read these two letters, we received what the spirit says to the churches is for them to have the simplicity and sincerity of our Lord and our God. And this is the voice which we get from these two letters.

From the perspective of prophesy, we already mentioned that the church at Ephesus represented the condition of the church at the end of the first century. And that was towards the end of the apostolic time. And from the point of prophesy the church at Smyrna represented the condition of the church in the second and third centuries. At the end of the first century, we see that the church has already left the first love. If we read the Book of Acts, at the beginning of the church, we can clearly see the first love they had for our Lord. But at the end of the first century, the first love had gradually diminished. Because our God loves the church, He allowed the world to persecute the church. He used the persecution to recover the first love that the church had for Him. And the church went through a lot of persecutions in the second and third centuries. And they were the suffering churches. But in the sufferings, the love in them towards God was purified. The Lord asked them to be faithful unto death.

And what does the church in Thyatira represent in terms of prophecy? The church at Thyatira represented the condition of the church from the sixth century to the sixteenth century. Here we see that Christianity gradually expanded. And it had lost a lot of truth before God. Here it said, *'the Son of God, He that has His eyes as a flame of fire and His feet are like fine brass'* said, the eyes of our Lord were like the flame of fire. There He saw the condition of the church. And His feet were like fine brass. Fine brass in the bible represented judgment. What His eyes saw as sin, His feet would step on them. He is the Son of God and this is His position. But the church had come to a point where they doubted His being the Son of God. The church did not give Him the sole position as the Son of God. So the Lord said to them, *'I know your works, and love, and faith, and service, and your endurance, and your last works to be more than the first'*. We see at that time the church had carried on many works. And we see that there were many services. If you read the church history, you see the Roman Catholic had many works. And they also had lots of services. The works they did at the later time were more than those they did before. They did many charitable works and the work of alms. They also had many creeds. But all these were just outward things. They did not originate from the life of Christ. Those were the works of men. They did the work of God according to the natural man.

The Lord said, I oppose you. Why did the Lord oppose them? It was because they permitted the woman Jezebel who called herself a prophetess to teach God's servants. We have seen this name Jezebel in the Old Testament. We know that there was a king of Israel called Ahab. He married a daughter of a king of Sidon by the name of Jezebel. She not only seduced Ahab but also controlled him. She

enticed him to worship the God of Sidon which is Baal. She enticed the whole nation to leave God and worship Baal. And because they worshipped idols, evil deeds came in. She led Ahab to do many unlawful things. Consequently, at that time, the nation of Israel committed grave sins before God.

We all should remember the story of Elijah. We see in the Book of I Kings that Elijah was a prophet at that time. Jezebel wanted to kill all of God's prophets. Elijah seemed to be the only prophet left. And then Elijah challenged Ahab. He gathered all the Israelites into his presence on the mountain of Carmel. Elijah asked all the Israelites, *'how long do you halt between two opinions? If Jehovah is God, follow Him; if Baal is God, then follow him.'* We remember how they offered up the sacrifices. The priests of Baal also erected an altar and they put the sacrifices on the altar. And they prayed to Baal and asked him to send fire to consume the sacrifice. Baal was a God of the sun. So they asked him to send fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice. From morning till evening, even though the priests were calling, dancing and cutting themselves, yet there was no fire. And Elijah said *'your God does not work'*. And then Elijah built an altar. He put the sacrifice on the altar. And he asked people to pour water on the sacrifice. The water was so full that it overflowed. And then he prayed to God. and God sent fire from heaven to burn up the sacrifice. It burned all the water and even the stones. Jehovah is God. Dear brothers and sisters, this is the story we read in the Old Testament.

In Revelation in the New Testament, we again see this woman Jezebel. She called herself a prophetess. She considered that she had revelations from God and she could tell people of the things of God. But we cannot find a woman called Jezebel in the New Testament. So we know this is symbolic again. And what does she represent here? She represents that the church had come to a point where the world entered into the church and ruled the church. All the things that are not of God was brought into the church. We know that Baal was the god of the sun. It was a very fierce one. In fact, at that time all the nations around Israel worshipped Baal. Each nation had their own Baal. The meaning of Baal is lord or possession. And this God was a fierce God. He asked for human sacrifices. And this was the nature of Baal.

And what kind of a God is Jehovah? We remember in Exodus, when Moses came before God, he asked God, *'if I find favor in your sight, let me see your glory'*. God said *'you cannot see my face; you can only see my back'*. And in the chapter 34 of Exodus, God descended from the clouds. Exodus 34: 5 - 7 *'And Jehovah came down in the cloud, and stood beside him there, and proclaimed the name of Jehovah. And Jehovah passed by before his face, and proclaimed, Jehovah, Jehovah God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy unto thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation'*. We see that Jehovah is a merciful and gracious God.

He is slow to anger. He has abundant love and truth. He is pleased to forgive. But He is also a righteous God, and so He cannot but judge. But He has mercy and grace. And this is the nature of Jehovah.

When you compare the nature of Jehovah and Baal, you see that it is so opposite to each other. Our God is a merciful and loving God. He wants us to draw near to Him and love Him. But Baal was a fierce God. He seemed to be high and far away. And whenever we think of Baal, we tremble inside. We know at that time, they not only brought Baal into the nation of Israel, but they had also changed the nature of their worship of their own God. They treat Jehovah God as Baal. Their feeling towards God became trembling and not reverence and love. We remember in the Book of Hosea 2: 16, God said, 'the time will come that you no longer call me Baali, no longer call me Lord, but you will call ish, that is, my husband. God loves us. He wants us to love Him as a wife loves her husband. He does not want us to be afraid of Him. And this fear is the fear of being punished. Of course, when we revere God, there is also fear in there. But that fear is not the fear of being punished. That fear is the fear that He will not be pleased, because we love Him. We want Him to be happy in all things. We fear that there are some things that will displease Him. This is not coming out of being terrified. I know that there are many brothers and sisters who think our Lord is a terrifying Lord. Some told me that God was there punishing me. And I told him God was not punishing you. God was disciplining you. He disciplines you because He loves you. He was not punishing you so you would die. But oftentimes our concept of God is so different from Him.

When we read the stories from the sixth century to the sixteenth century, the concept of God among the people at that time was completely changed. At that time, the people were not allowed to read the bible. All the bibles were chained. The children of God did not know what is truth. They only knew what the pope and the Vatican said. And we can see many images. They said God is so majestic and glorious that you cannot go into His presence. And people have to go through a mediator to get to God. So the system of priests was established. The counsel said if you want to pray to the Lord, the Lord may not listen to you. But the heart of the female is always more tender, so you need to pray to Mary. And then Mary will speak on your behalf. This way, your sins will be forgiven. You see the entire truth was buried. All became superstitions. If you go to mass, you can reduce your punishment. When one dies, one has to go to the purgatory. Only a few who had been canonized as saints had enough virtues when they were alive. And when they died, they went directly to heaven. And because their virtues were so abundant, you can also pray to them and they can give you some virtues. This way, you can lessen the days you will be in purgatory. You can also lessen the days in purgatory by praying a rosary. In the sixteenth century, they sold indulgences. If you were willing to pay, you could buy indulgences and your sins would be forgiven. At that time, the pope wanted to build a cathedral and also to fill his own treasury. He sent people all over Europe to sell indulgences. Some people were really good businessmen. They said when you

dropped your money into the box for the indulgences, the soul would come out of the purgatory. Also, when you bought these indulgences, not only that all your previous sins would be forgiven, but even your future sins would be forgiven. There was a joke. There was a man who wanted to rob the one who had the indulgence box. So he first bought an indulgence. When he was caught, he said I have the indulgence. Not only would God forgive, the country would forgive him too. No one could punish him. If you have money, he would charge you more. Brothers and sisters, at that time, the nature of God was completely changed. All things became like worshipping idols. All were superstitions. All was darkness. We call that time the Dark Ages. For these reasons, Martin Luther and others came out to reform.

Dear brothers and sisters, we know that the truth of God is pure. The way of God is single. God is a pure God. But today, the complexity of man came in. We know man from the beginning was already complicated. The complexity started in the garden of Eden. God is very pure. He created man because He loves man. He told man not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because He loves man. His command is very simple. He only has one command. Man can eat the fruits of all the trees except for the fruits of that tree. If our forefather's heart was pure towards God, and did not think of himself or had other thoughts, then he would be so happy in the garden of Eden. But the serpent was complicated. And because of his complexity, he planted his complexity into the heart of man. And it caused man to become complicated. Man started to doubt the love of God and think only for himself. The result was that man sinned. Dear brothers and sisters, men are always complicated. Each one of us is complicated. Because of the complexity of men, it changes the simplicity of God. As a result, today we see that the church has become very complicated. We see the thoughts of men came into the church. We see the children of God fighting with and attacking each other. We have lost that simplicity of God.

In the beginning the church was very simple. We can use one sentence from the bible to describe the condition. It is in Acts 2: 42, '*And they persevered in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles, in breaking of bread and prayers*'. These were the four aspects of church life at that time. The teaching of the apostles, the fellowship of the apostles, the breaking of bread and prayers. That is the life of the church. What is the teaching of the apostles? The teaching of the apostles is not the teaching of the apostles themselves. It is not to say this is the teaching of Peter or this is the teaching of Paul. Many times, people said the teaching of Paul is opposite to the teaching of James. Even Martin Luther had this kind of thinking. He loved the epistles of Paul the most. He said the letter to the Galatians was his wife, and he was married to it. But he said the book of James was like a straw. He could use the book of Galatians to fight the battle. But he could never use the book of James to fight the battle.

Brothers and sisters, what is the teaching of the apostles? It is not to say that each of the apostles had their own teaching. The teaching of the apostles was what was received from the Lord. No matter which apostle it was, their teaching is just one. Their teaching is the teaching of Christ. However the Lord taught, that was how they taught. They did not have their own teaching. So you can see that their teaching is just one. Why is it called the teaching of the apostles? It is because the revelation of God through the Holy Spirit was given to the apostles. Today our knowledge of Christ is from the teaching of the apostles. And that is the New Testament that we now have. That is why it is called the teaching of the apostles. But in fact, that actually is the teaching of Christ. What did they teach? What they taught is nothing else but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. They did not put in their own interpretation. They exalted Christ. They hid themselves. The Lord has to increase and they had to decrease. This is their teaching.

But brothers and sisters, what is the condition of the church today? Originally, the word of God is pure. If we read Psalm 19, we see the word of God is so pure. If we read II Timothy 3: 16, it said the word of God is divinely inspired. The Holy Spirit breathed the word. It is the breath of the Holy Spirit and not of man. *So all scriptures are for teaching, conviction and for correction so man can be perfected to be fitted to do every good work.* We see the word of God is pure. It is not yes and no. It is not something fabled. It is not something one can explain this way or that way and have both ways still right to fit into what you want. We see the word of God is simple. because God Himself is simple. But today we made God's word to be complicated. We reached many interpretations of the word of God. We are just like the Jews at that time. God gave them the law. Then they had scripture rabbi and they interpreted the law of God. They applied the word of God to every single thing. For example, they cannot do work on the sabbath. And then they explained what is considered as work. You remember when the Lord was on earth, He and His disciples walked through a corn field. The disciples were hungry. Why were they hungry? They should be full because they were following the Lord. But they were hungry. So they took the corn and they rubbed and ate them. The pharisees said you have violated the sabbath. If you took the corn out of the cob that was not work. But when you had to rub the cob to get it out, then that was work. So from generations to generations many traditions were added in. The traditions buried the word of God. The Lord said, 'you followed the traditions of men but violated the word of God'.

Dear brothers and sisters, we see the condition of the church today is like that. We see that men have made the word of God so complicated. We do not know who to listen to. We listen to this and think it sounds reasonable. We listen to that and we also think it is reasonable. Everyone quoted the bible. But they all take the verses out of context. So that we are really confused. Not only is the situation like this, but many of the teaching could not be found in the bible. It gets to a point where those teachings that are not found in the bible are

much more than those found in the bible. The complexity of man came in. And this is the work of Jezebel.

Dear brothers and sisters, what is the fellowship of the apostles? Is it that the apostles have their own fellowship? Was it that the twelve apostles came together and have one fellowship and Paul was outside of this fellowship? So Paul and his coworkers should come together and had their own fellowship. Was it that every apostle had their own realm of fellowship? No, it is not. The fellowship of the apostles is not the fellowship of the apostles. The fellowship of the apostle is the fellowship of the Lord. In I Corinthians 1: 9 the Chinese translation is a little off. 'We are called to fellowship with the Son'. In the original language it is that we have been called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. God called us, all who believe in the Lord. God is faithful. He called us, and where does He call us to? He calls us into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. I John 1: 3 said *'That which we have seen and heard we report to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is indeed with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ'*. This is the fellowship of the apostles. The apostles fellowshiped with the Lord. But John also said *'and our fellowship is indeed with the father, and with His Son Jesus Christ'*. They took what they heard and saw in their fellowship, and they told us what their fellowship is. And they reported to us, so that we can all fellowship with them. The meaning of fellowship is sharing. It is to say that what I have, you also have. We are the same. This is fellowship. So the apostles fellowshiped with us the Christ that they knew. And then we have the Christ that they had. This way we not only fellowship with the Son of God, but we also fellowship with each other. In the entire universe there is just one fellowship called the fellowship of God. And this fellowship is just one in the whole universe.

Before the creation of the world, there is this fellowship in the Godhead. God, the Son and the Holy Spirit fellowship. And they share all things. And all through they are like that. And they are equal in all things. And that fellowship is the most glorious fellowship. There is no personal opinion in there. And they are of one accord. They have no self. God the father for God the Son and the God the Son for God the Father, and the Holy Spirit for the Son. And we can see that this is a beautiful and glorious fellowship. On one hand, this fellowship is the most exclusive because there are only three in there. Besides these three, others cannot join. But God loves men. And because our Lord loves us, He finished salvation on the cross. And God opened up His own fellowship to call us, those who believe in Him to enter into the fellowship of the Son. So that we can inherit all that His Son has.

Dear brothers and sisters, this is the fellowship of the apostles. The fellowship of the apostles is the fellowship of God's Son. Today there is only one fellowship in the whole universe. We know on earth there are many different fellowships. Some are like clubs. Some are like fraternities. Some are just gatherings. You have your own fellowship. I have my fellowship. If you want to

join, you have to satisfy certain requirements. Even in the United States, there are problems with clubs because some clubs are only for men. So people say this is not equal. Women should be able to join and become members too. So there are all different kinds of so called fellowships on earth. Even in the church there are different circles of people. They do not make Christ as the center of fellowship. And their fellowship is not based on the life of Christ. Some use a doctrine as the basis of their fellowship. Some based their fellowship on one certain experience. Some use a system as their basis for fellowship. Some use a person as the basis of their fellowship.

We see today the children of God is very divisive. We have forgotten that our God is one. The fellowship of the apostles is one. All those who are redeemed and saved are in that one fellowship. What Christ accepts; we accept no matter what their background is, what interpretation they have and no matter what experiences they have. As long as we are in Christ, we are one. We have to strive to maintain the unity that the Holy Spirit gave. We need to fellowship with each other in Christ. Dear brothers and sisters, today the children of God are so complicated. We see that the children of God cannot fellowship together with each other. Not only that we do not fellowship together, we do not even see each other. You stretch out your right hand to shake. You see that the other brothers and sisters take their hands back. We cannot have fellowship because you are not in my circle. Brothers and sisters, men are so complicated. God calls us to return to the simplicity in Christ.

The breaking of the bread is set up by our Lord on the night He was betrayed. Because the Lord loves His church, so He left this for us. He said, this is my body broken for you. You should do so in remembrance of me. This is the new covenant made with my blood. You should drink of it in remembrance of me. This was so simple. This was the love feast. He wants His children to remember Him. He wants to unite with His children. He wants His children to wait for His return. We see that on that night the condition was so simple. But today the so called the Lord's table is so complicated. We even say this is my table; that is your table. This is my bread, and that is your bread. We cannot sit at one table to break bread together to remember the Lord. Brothers and sisters, today we have made the breaking of bread so complicated. I have attended some meetings that I can attend their meetings, but I cannot join their bread breaking. I need to have the same interpretation in all doctrines and then they will receive me. Did our Lord give us all these requirements on that night? He did not. Our Lord just wanted us to remember Him. Not only this, today we have turned the breaking of bread into the holy communion. If you go to the Catholic church, the priest will come say the mass. He has to remember a hundred movements. There is a rule to every movement. If you have to think of these movements all the time, how can you think of the Lord? Today we have made the breaking of the bread so complicated. Dear brothers and sisters, it is the same with prayers. Our Lord wants us to pray. This prayer not only refers to ourselves. The Lord

wants us to come together and pray before Him in one accord. But today we cannot pray together because we are not of the same heart.

Dear brothers and sisters, the complexity of men has taken away the simplicity of God. When our Lord was on earth, His life was so simple. He came to the earth, Psalm 40 said, you have prepared a body for me. I come to obey your will. It was very simple. When He was twelve years old, He went to Jerusalem to the temple. At that time, He became the Son of law. He remained in the temple. To Him, it was a very natural thing. When His parents came to seek Him and said to Him, 'son, why did you do this to us, so that we are sad'. The Lord replied, 'do you not know I have to be mindful of the things of my Father'. He then obeyed them and went home with them.

When our Lord came out to preach, you see how simple He was. He said, 'by myself, I cannot say anything. I speak what I hear from my father'. He said, 'I cannot do anything by myself. I saw what my Father does and I do according to my Father. He said, my time is not in my hand. Your time is convenient. You can do whatever you want. I cannot. If the Father's time has not come, I will not move'. His brothers were so complicated. They told the Lord, there was none who wanted to proclaim his own name would hide in the mountains. You should go to show yourself to everyone at the festivals in Jerusalem. Their minds were so complicated. The Lord said, my time has not yet come. The command of the Lord has not come yet. Even the mother of the Lord was complicated. When the Lord first came out to do work, in the Gospel according to John chapter 2, they were all invited to a wedding feast in Cana. This young couple had to be very popular. Too many guests came, and more than expected. So the wine was gone. When Jesus' mother saw the situation, her complexity came in. She said, my Son could do that. This was now a good chance to prove that He is the Messiah. So she implied to the Lord Jesus that all the wine was gone. The Lord knew what she meant. The Lord said, my time has not yet come. Dear brothers and sisters, you see men are so complicated. The disciples were also that complicated. In Matthew 16, the Lord said to His disciples, 'I have to go to Jerusalem and I will be killed. On the third day I will resurrect'. Peter took hold of the Lord and said, 'Lord, it cannot be so'. Was it because He loves the Lord? He did love the Lord but he loved himself more. Because if the Lord had to go to the cross, the disciples had to go to the cross too. You see how complicated men are. Dear brothers and sisters, the life of our Lord on earth was very simple. It was only to please the Father. He did not have any other purpose except that one.

But today we are so complicated. We consider this and think about that. However we think, we always think of ourselves. The Lord said to the church in Thyatira, you had to come out from the complexity. What you were speaking there was the depths of Satan. This was too mysterious and ordinary people could not understand. Only very few people were initiated into this depth. See how complicated this became? Yes, our God has His own mystery, the mystery of God, the mystery of Christ. Indeed, there is mystery here but it is very different

from the mystery of the depths of Satan. This mystery was hidden in God. But God, through His spirit revealed this mystery. This is hidden from those who are wise. And this is revealed to babes. If we have a heart of a baby, a simple heart, a pure heart, the mystery of God will be revealed to us. This is such a simple thing. So dear brothers and sisters, the Lord said, there are a few among you that did not follow this complication. You have to keep what you have until I come.

Dear brothers and sisters, may the Lord enlighten us and search our hearts to see the complexity in our heart. We have to look to the mercy of God so we can come out from all complexities, so that we can have a simple heart towards Christ. Simplicity is not ignorance. Sometimes we think this person is ignorant because he is simple. Paul was not an ignorant person. Most probably, there is no one among us that can be compared to him. He said, 'what I can boast before God is that I live in the simplicity of Christ'. There was only one heart and one mind in the whole life of Paul. And that was Christ. For Christ, he forsook all things as dung, and considered Jesus Christ as treasure. He said, 'I am not concerned about my own life. I just want to finish to walk the path that God has for me'. This was simplicity. So, he told the Corinthians 'You are so complicated'. You know they had misgivings about Paul. They tried to guess why Paul did things this way or that way. And they were very complicated. Paul said to them, 'I am afraid you have lost your simple heart towards Christ'. What the Spirit says to the church is for us to come out from the complexity, and return to the simplicity of Christ. To return to simplicity is to return to Christ.

What follows is the church at Sardis. What are the words that the Spirit speaks to the churches? Not only do they have to be simple, they have to be sincere. If they are not simple, they are not sincere. The opposite of sincerity is hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is only in name but not in reality. They had this name but no reality. And this was hypocrisy. What is hypocrisy? Our Chinese translation is good. It is translated as empty and false. Empty is there is nothing inside. False is nothing inside. You have nothing inside but just a name outside. This is hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is not sincere. The outside and the inside are not the same. Behaving one way before people, but another story before God. And this is not sincere. When our Lord was on earth, He was the sincerest one. He was the same inside and outside. He was the same to God and to men. Even His enemies could see that. We remember in Matthew 21, when the chief priests and the elders came to tempt our Lord, they said, 'you are true and honest. You do not cater to the face of man'. So they used His sincerity to tempt Him.

It is the same today. The world is a lie. All men are not sincere. Paul said in Romans that only God is true. All men are false. And we live in this falsehood, false here and false there. If you want to be true, no one will believe you. They will misunderstand you. So when our Lord was on earth, He was misunderstood by men, because men measured Him with their own falsehood. So a simple and sincere man will encounter lots of sufferings. Brothers and sisters, our Lord is

sincere. So He asks us to be sincere. What the Lord hates most is hypocrisy. And when He was on earth, He said many times woe to you hypocrites. In the Old Testament, one thing that God hated was hypocrisy.

Dear brothers and sisters, today the condition of the church is like the one in Sardis. There is inconsistency inside and outside. On the outside there is the name but no content in the inside. We are there cheating and misleading. We are not honest and sincere before God. Although sometimes our conscience rebukes us, yet we have covered our conscience. Please remember, no matter it is simplicity or sincerity, it is not a natural thing. Some people are very straight forward in their nature. Nathaniel was like that. In the first chapter of John when Andrew went to find Nathaniel, Nathaniel said, 'how can any good come out of Nazarene?' He was very straight. When he came to the Lord, the Lord said, 'see this is a true Israelite and there is no dishonesty in him'. This was straight forward in nature, and this kind always brought trouble. If not for the mercy of God, Nathaniel would have rejected the Jesus of Nazarene.

The sincerity spoken of here does not point to the natural straight forwardness. In fact, speaking honestly, there is no one on this earth that is sincere. It is just a matter of degree. It is not a matter of nature. No one can say that he is true before God and there is no guile in him. This is not sincerity. Sincerity comes from the Lord because His life is true. His life is simple. Only when there is the outflowing of the life of the Lord in us is there the simplicity and sincerity of God. We need to repent. We need to come to the Lord and confess that we are so complicated. We need to come to the Lord and confess that we are so hypocritical. There is no way that we can change ourselves. We cannot be sincere. We cannot do it. We can only look to His mercy. Only when the life of Christ fills us, then can we manifest simplicity and sincerity. So the Lord said, 'return to me'. Besides going back to Christ, there is no other way. May the Lord have mercy on us.

Let us pray.

Our God, may we see light in your light. We cannot point to others. We can only say this to ourselves. Lord, we are so complicated. We are so hypocritical. We want to repent before you. We look unto your mercy. We ask you to take our place. Your life reigns in us. Save us from complexity so we can enter into your simplicity. Save us from hypocrisy and help us to enter into your sincerity. So that your name will not be put to shame on earth. So that your testimony can be restored on earth. Hear our prayer. We pray in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.