

A silhouette of a person reading a book at sunset. The person is on the right side of the frame, holding an open book. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright glow and lens flare effects. The background is a clear sky with some distant trees or hills.

4 DAYS

FAST &  
PRAYER

7.8-15.9.2020

*Hearing The Holy Spirit for The Times  
We Live In ( Revelation 2-3)*

NECF  
MALAYSIA





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# Hearing the Holy Spirit for the Times We Live In

**Rev Dr Eu Hong Seng**

(Chairman of National Evangelical Christian Fellowship)

The seven churches listed in Revelation 1:11 are said to be representative of the churches in the last days before Jesus Christ's second coming.

Scriptures describe them as the seven golden lampstands (Rev 1:13), and in their midst stands the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to His feet and girded about His chest was a golden band.

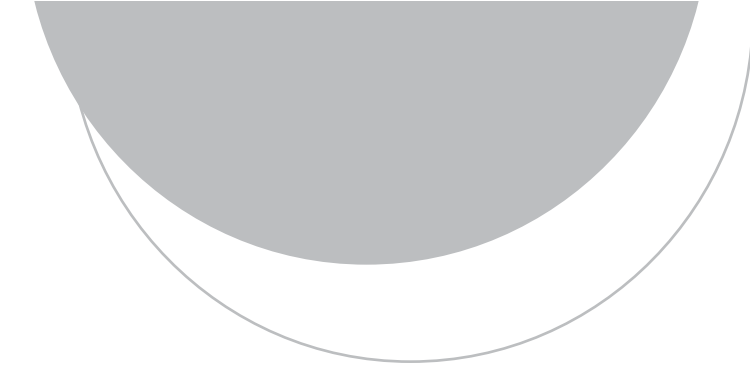
Each one of these churches received the clear message, *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

Firstly, it is important to note it is “ear” and not “ears.” God wants us to hear not just with our physical ears, but also with our inner ear, a reference to the spirit of our inner man.

Let us not miss the pertinent truth that He is a God who not only speaks but specifically wants to speak to us, His people. As He bids, it is incumbent that we hear with our ear.

Unfortunately, the Church today does not hear well. We do not take pains to walk closely with Him as commanded. We slack in prayer and in the study of His Word. We have skewed motives when we want to hear from Him. We often walk in pride and lust after the things of the world. We do not endeavour to renew our mind, walk in holiness, nor recognise that He speaks in many ways. Few of us set aside time regularly to hear His messages and, sadly, we are not enthusiastic in wanting to obey His voice.

It is what the Spirit says that matters! Not what man suggests, not what the world trumpets, not what children insist on, not



what close friends cajole, not what psychiatrists or psychologists counsel, nor even what statesmen promulgate.

The Church is bombarded with so many conflicting and competing sounds. What is missing is the still small voice of the Spirit and the prophetic echoes from His throne room.

Too many are running to and fro, distracted, distraught and directionless.

“What the Spirit says to the churches” - there are undoubtedly many voices crowding out His voice.

The last power tussle in our nation after the resignation of our seventh Prime Minister affords us a good but unfortunate example of the deaf and dull Church. Many joined the busy chatter of the nation while others, who were disciplined enough to pray, filled the war-room with cries for their preferred outcome. Honestly, how many actually paused to hear what the Spirit was saying and genuinely sought God’s perfect will for our nation?

The prophet Isaiah exclaimed, “*Who among you will give ear to this? Who will listen and hear for the time to come?*” (Isa 42:23 NLT)

This prophetic question still reverberates in our church halls, homes, streets, alleys, malls, schools and in our government offices - “who will give ear ... who will listen.”

“*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*” This call was repeated seven times in the apocalyptic book! It is time we hear.



# Year of a New Decade

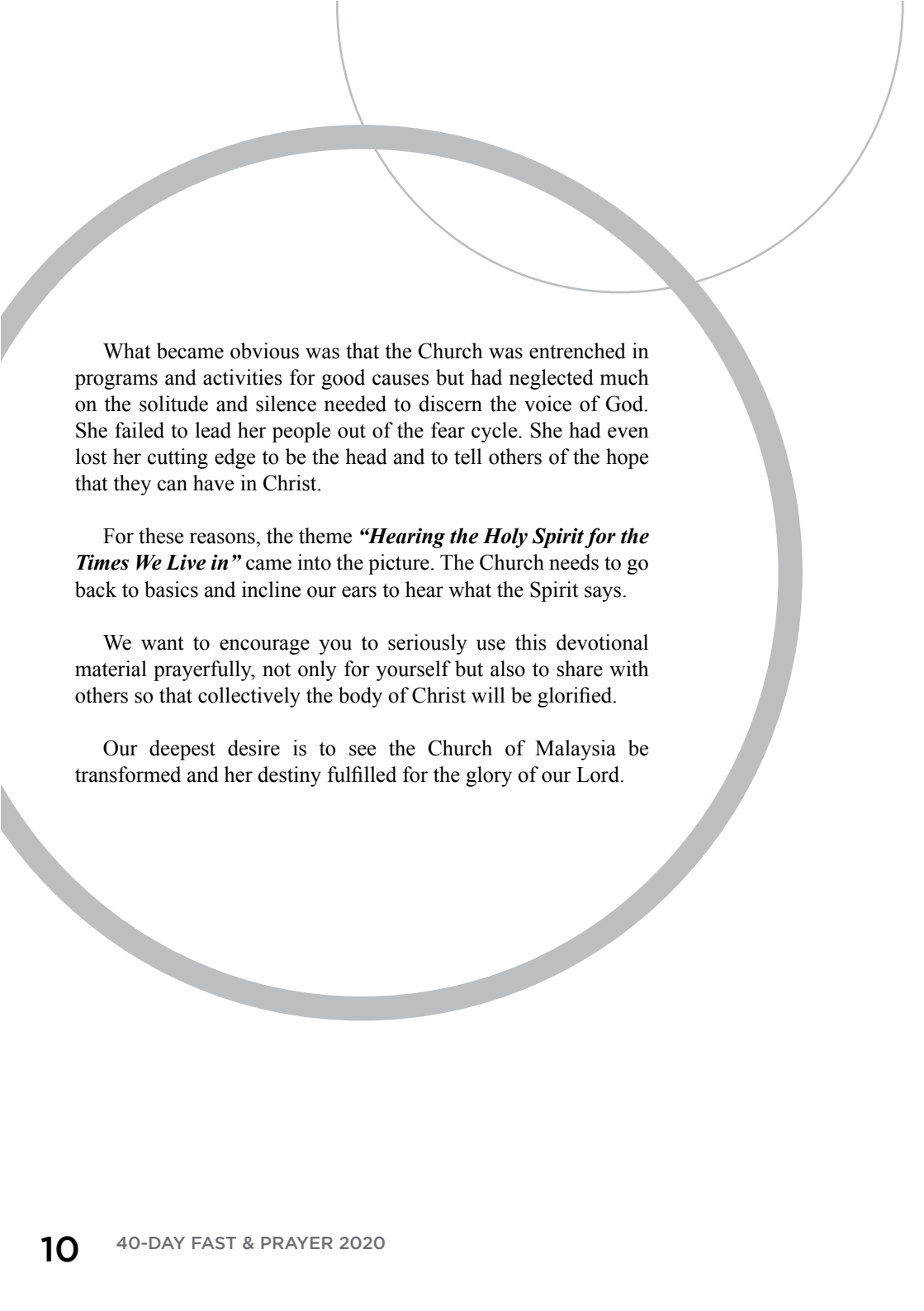
**Pr Sam Ang**

(Secretary General of NECF)

Year 2020 will be a significant year for NECF. It will be a year of a new decade when our Lord will do a new thing for His church. What a joy it will be as NECF celebrates our 20th Year of running this annual flagship event, *“The 40-Day Fast and Prayer,”* serving evangelical churches in Malaysia.

When the Working Committee members were discussing the theme of the 2020 Prayer Book in November 2019, we anticipated that the year ahead will be a challenging one for the Malaysian Church. Little did we know that within the first two months of the new year, the world would face three calamities, namely the bushfire in Australia, the locust pestilence in Africa and the COVID-19 epidemic in China that has now gone global. The immediate effect that we are presently witnessing is discouragement, disengagement and a total lack of direction.

Our immediate concern at working committee meeting was what the Church would be like when we enter a fresh decade. What was clear to us at the close of the previous year was that the Church lacked discernment on the issues that she was facing and therefore had lost her position as salt and light. She had also displayed her lack of confidence in the Lord and began to retreat instead of advance in the public space.



What became obvious was that the Church was entrenched in programs and activities for good causes but had neglected much on the solitude and silence needed to discern the voice of God. She failed to lead her people out of the fear cycle. She had even lost her cutting edge to be the head and to tell others of the hope that they can have in Christ.

For these reasons, the theme “*Hearing the Holy Spirit for the Times We Live in*” came into the picture. The Church needs to go back to basics and incline our ears to hear what the Spirit says.

We want to encourage you to seriously use this devotional material prayerfully, not only for yourself but also to share with others so that collectively the body of Christ will be glorified.

Our deepest desire is to see the Church of Malaysia be transformed and her destiny fulfilled for the glory of our Lord.

# Are we hearing the Spirit of God?


**Rev Looi Kok Kim**

(Chairman of Prayer Commission, NECF)

In times of crisis, what good can we see for a nation? The COVID-19 pandemic outbreak has taken thousands of lives. The locust plagues in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somali have destroyed hundreds of farmlands and crops, resulting in food shortages. These have caused great fear and uncertainties globally. The fear of the unknown can trigger out-of-control situations. It can ripple out into socio-economic slumps and political uncertainties. A suffering nation may hope for recovery but may not see any good coming out of the situation.

On the other hand, in any arising crisis, there is always an awakening or warning call! It is a call from God to His children to wake-up and return to Him. In our case, we may need a literal change of our daily routines and lifestyles, but it will be a change from comfort to intentionally make time for the LORD. It is to set apart a time to read God's word - perhaps in big portions daily (follow our daily schedule if you can), then reflect on it and pray. Deuteronomy 17:18-20 sets for us the rules of life. Although the passage was intended for the kings, it is also applicable for every believer in Christ to do likewise. It is a non-negotiable discipline to read the Bible daily for the rest of our lives. The main objective is to know "Who God is!"(Daniel 11:32)

Global or national crises are markers in a time-line to prepare God's people to move forward. During critical moments of any situation, do not lose heart, panic or speak negatively. In Matthew 24:6-8, Jesus had already forewarned us. It is also a good reminder to realign our relationship with God, and to know God's destiny for our lives and for Malaysia. The waves of a spiritual boost come with awakening, revival, and transformation. But the



most important focus is all about God's destiny for Malaysia. Therefore, what good can we foresee for Malaysia? God has a destiny for Malaysia. What is needed is to saturate our lives in the Word of God and to let the Holy Spirit reveal Himself at times like this.

Hearing the Spirit of God cannot be separated from saturating in the Word of God. The effort of disciplining ourselves to know God and following Him will enable us to grow deep in Him. The crucial work of the Kingdom of God must be carried out in fervent prayers and in doing His will. It is a higher level of spiritual nurturing. God's people who love Malaysia must rise above itemized prayers. More fears will crouch in but for those who know God, they shall abide in Him and stand firm to fulfill His destiny.

In this 40 days booklet "***Hearing the Holy Spirit for the Times We Live In,***" the focus will be on Bible reading, followed by reflections on the Word of God, and allowing the Spirit of God to lead you to pray based on the general prayer guides and beyond. Remember, our focus is to know God.

Before you start to fast, seek the Lord in selecting any one of these - partial fast (skip one or two meals), Daniel's fast (abstain from meat) or full fast (drink only water or juices). You will truly experience the joy within, the refreshing relationship, and abundant strength that comes from Him. Be blessed in your journey as you pursue God.

# God's Chosen Fast

*As You Pray and Fast, Give to the NECF 40-Day Fast and Prayer Fund for the Poor and Defenceless*


As we enter another season of fasting and prayer for the nation, we want to specifically remember the people that were severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the Movement Control Order which started in March this year, many businesses suffered closure, workers were left without jobs and families without income. To help and assist such needy ones, the charity fund from this fasting season has been designated to help the poor and needy impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

As you fast, please give generously towards these needy ones. For any amount that you would like to contribute, either individually or corporately, please bank in directly to NECF's (National Evangelical Christian Fellowship's) bank account in Public Bank (no: 3078972807). Please send us your bank-in slips by email ([prayer@necf.org.my](mailto:prayer@necf.org.my)) or fax (03-77291139), indicating that it is for the 40-Day Fast & Prayer Charity Fund.

## Why Must We Give?

Isaiah 58 records the Lord's unhappiness over Israel's devotion and fasting. They had been seeking Him diligently together with fasting, and, yet, the Lord was not happy with them. There was something that was amiss about their devotion.

What was missing was their disconnection with the needy around them. They had a heavenly pursuit that had no earthly usefulness. They claimed to love God but were oblivious to the sufferings around them. While they diligently sought God, the needy remained oppressed, hungry and neglected. God found their devotion hollow and a false representation of true religion.



What is true religion? James wrote in his epistle to the twelve tribes that pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is to visit the orphans and widows in trouble and to keep oneself unspotted from the world. (James 1:27)

One cannot claim to love God without caring for the needs of others. Apostle John in his epistle to the church questioned how the love of God could be abiding for whoever has this world's goods and sees his brother in need but shuts his heart from him (1 John 3:17.)

To love God, is to love others, especially the needy. When Jesus was asked which was the greatest commandment, he replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:36-40)

In another part of the Bible, the prophet Micah declared to the children of Israel, "God has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? But to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)

Therefore, our fasting should not only lead us to greater humility and devotion to God, but also to love and reach out to the needy and defenceless around us. Then will our fasting be pleasing and blessed of God as promised in Isaiah 58.

Day 1-3

**Preparing  
Our Heart, Mind  
and Spirit  
to Hear**

*(Revelation 2-3)*

## To Him Who Overcomes

*“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes....” (Revelation 2:7, NKJV)*

The above statement was proclaimed to all the seven churches of Revelation. They were called to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying and to be overcomers during the dark and challenging days ahead of them.

In today’s reading of Matthew 1-5, we will also realize that our Lord Jesus Christ was born in such dark times to bring hope, healing and reconciliation to a broken world that is infected with injustice, corruption and foul play at every level of society.

But right in the midst of it all, God the Father decided that it was time for His only begotten Son to step into the world born as a baby through the Virgin Mary.

Though the warfare started from the onset of Jesus’ birth, God was in control each step of the way. By the time Jesus began His public ministry the Kingdom of God started to make its impact. Old ways of living and thoughts were challenged and He was calling for disciples who were willing to think and act differently. (See Matthew 5:1-16) That call still applies to us today.

Can you see yourself in this environment? Are you willing to be the salt and light for such a time as this? If you are, let us prepare our hearts, minds and spirits to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to us and learn how to be overcomers for our people, our children and grandchildren.

### Today’s Prayers:

- Pray that, as believers in this present age with overwhelming demands and distractions, counterfeits and falsehood, we will continue to be renewed in our thoughts and spirits, that our hearts and our minds will be aligned to the truth of God, and that we can be effective ambassadors of Christ who overcome the world and who bring hope, healing and reconciliation to the broken communities.
- Pray for the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri’ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah ibni Almarhum Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah Al-Musta’in Billah, that the His Majesty will continue to exercise his power wisely either on a discretionary basis or upon advice of the Prime Minister, the Cabinet or the Conference of Rulers, in order to keep and uphold the peace, harmony and prosperity of the nation.



## Be Salt & Light

Today we continue with our journey in responding to His call to be the salt and light.

From Matthew 6-10, we see that Jesus not only taught the people about the changes they need to undergo in order to be the salt and light in their community, he also demonstrated it by healing the rejected (leper), the unseen but precious (a Centurion's servant) and many others. Regardless of their race, position and vocation (some of them were despised by the society at large, such as Matthew the tax collector), Jesus demonstrated God's everlasting love to everyone who came to Him and He touched lives wherever He went.

At the same time, He also taught us to have pure motives in whatever we do so that we will please our Heavenly Father. We are to seek His Kingdom of Justice, Truth, Righteousness and Loving-Kindness while at the same time walking in forgiveness. He warned us that it is not going to be easy as we will face challenges and opposition - sometimes even from our loved ones.

Think about it: During such times, while our thoughts are more likely to be on self-preservation, Jesus is challenging us to be as sheep among wolves. We are to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. (See Matthew 10:16-20)

### Today's Prayers:

- Pray that we will be salt and light in our communities and that we will touch lives personally in our daily walk with God, demonstrating the power, values, characters, and lifestyles of the Kingdom of God that the communities we live in shall come to know the beauty, wonders and majesty of God.
- Pray for the Prime Minister of Malaysia, that the Lord will bless him with good health and excellent spirit, that he shall be the pillar of strength and exercise sound and wise judgment with a heart of integrity whenever he executes his premiership over the Cabinet and his governmental authority over the nation.

## Hear What the Spirit Says

For today's reading we find a different set of narratives:

1. John the Baptist's faith was shaken when he was in prison.
2. Warnings to cities that did not repent and to the stubborn religious leaders.
3. Why some will not be given revelational knowledge by God (Reasons why Jesus used Parables).
4. How a person is defiled.

Are you able to capture and identify with what you have read?

Whatever position we are in now, let us

take time to seek God in prayer. Ask Him to forgive our sins so that they will not hinder the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

Pray specifically: Our sins could be unbelief, self-righteousness, judgmental attitudes, pride, or defiled minds (pornography; addiction to internet games, etc.) As we pray in sincerity and honesty, the Lord Jesus will cleanse us from all unrighteousness. See 1 John 1:9.

Take time to do this. Don't rush through this process of confession and repentance as this is a critical part of our 40-Day journey. It will increase our sensitivity in hearing what the Holy Spirit is saying to us. We need to be sanctified and purified before He can help us to be overcomers.

### Today's Prayers:

- Pray that churches in Malaysia will learn to take heed of the Word of God, and that we will keep ourselves awake and not slumber, to repent and not to be hard-hearted and that we will be able to humble ourselves and to seek the healing of our land and our peoples, so that we shall experience God's visitation and favour as we seek and love Him with all our hearts, with all our souls and with all our strength. For Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." (Matthew 11:15)
- Pray for the Ministry in the Prime Minister's Department in the Religious Affairs Division, that the Islamic policy of "Rahmah" (Mercy to all creation concept) will be implemented with due respect given to all religious parties, races and people groups. Pray also that the Ministry will help build a society with a common goal towards loving-kindness, tolerance and freedom of religion, as well as strengthen the social wellbeing, prosperity and unity of our nation in a peaceful and respectful way.

# Day 4-8

## Renewing Our First Love

*(Revelation 2:1-7)*

<sup>1</sup> *“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.*

<sup>2</sup> *“I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false.*

<sup>3</sup> *I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary.*

<sup>4</sup> *But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.*

<sup>5</sup> *Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.*

<sup>6</sup> *Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*

<sup>7</sup> *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.’*



## Keep Our Light Burning

The High Priest had the responsibility to enter the Holy Place, twice a day, to trim the wicks, pour in fresh oil and remove impurities from the Golden lamp stand. It was a constant action, not occasional. It was so that the light would never grow dim nor flicker, and would never be extinguished.

This is how God works, daily, in our lives.

No one knows us better than Jesus, and He cares DAILY for us. He continually “walks” with us, breathing into our lives. His eyes are perpetually upon us, upon His Church. He knows our works, our sufferings, and our sins, and those eyes

are as a flame of fire, so that He sees with a penetration, discernment, and accuracy which no other can.

Our eyes are dim and dulled by the culture around us while His are a flame of fire, seeing us in our truest condition.

So we pray today, “Lord, our great High Priest, come to us, to the Church in our nation and put our light in order. Visit us with Your fire and set us to be a flame again in purity and power. Lord, remove all impurities, showmanship, compromises, superficiality, arrogance and divisions. Search us and sanctify us. Pour fresh oil upon us to overflowing. Cause us to burn bright for You, for Your glory and honour. Amen.”

### Today’s Prayers:

- Pray for God to ignite the fire of evangelism in the hearts of His people, the Church in Malaysia, and that we will cultivate a lifestyle of evangelism, with a love and passion to share Christ to the non-believing world. Pray also for empowerment of the Holy Spirit to be witnesses of Christ and enlightenment to those who hear the Good News.
- Pray for the Parliament and Law Division in the Prime Minister’s Department that, as the law department works on the reformation of our current law, they will have thorough assessment over its implementation and enforcement, so that whatever is drafted, amended or abolished will be fair and equitable to all.



## Examine Our Fire

There are three things His fiery eyes search and bring to light.

One: That which reduces our fire, without forgetting our works, our labour, our patience, or how we cannot bear falsehood, etc. “I have just ONE thing against you!” He sees both what is right and wrong, that which we overlook or neglect- His love affirms and corrects.

In Revelation 3:19 He says (my paraphrase), “I continually discipline, prod and correct everyone I love; so I must discipline you unless you turn from your indifference and become enthusiastic about the things of God. So make up your minds to turn away from your sins so that you live at your best.”

It is necessary for us that we make a discovery of our compromises more than of our good qualities and great accomplishments. We have worked tirelessly building big buildings, bigger

churches and organizations, more church planting. We have given millions generously to missions and the poor. We have great zeal, passion, dedication, and sacrifice; and persevered through valleys and mountains in life and ministry.

We have pursued vision and mission with diligence and bold faith. Having put our hand to the plow we have not looked back, but have solidly pressed forward, and remained faithful to God. But, dear friend, it has all been by the grace of God alone.

Regrettably, like the Ephesians, many of us have forgotten our first love as we plunge into all the great work. The danger is that everything will continue as it is while the fire of our first love flickers perilously blown by the winds of all our busy activities.

Christ calls us to examine the condition of that fire today.

### Today’s Prayers:

- Give thanks to God for His correction upon our lives and churches as His intention is always for our own good and to lead us back to His righteousness and light. Pray that we will have a humble heart to do a self-check today and respond to God in repentance in areas where we have fallen short of His glory.
- Pray for the Election Commission that it will ensure and carry out impartial and efficient operations in the coming Malaysian General Elections without any man-made electoral frauds or manipulation.

## Consider How Far We Have “Fallen”

The second thing to notice is that He calls us to consider, or simply put, to remember. We are not to remember our first love as some nostalgic memory but, rather, we are to remember or to consider and compare how far we have “fallen” i.e. our present condition. It is allowing His fiery eyes to check our hearts.

When we first came to Jesus, our zeal and passion was red-hot. Nothing could deter us from coming to church, attending prayer meetings, giving sacrificially, reading scriptures, listening to sermons and telling others about Him. We could not get enough of it all. Nothing was too difficult to do for Him.

Then, as the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4) describes - the worries of life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things came in and began to choke that passion. Also, maybe, we get so busy and preoccupied with the work of the Lord that we forget and begin to forsake our first love for the Lord of the work. What can we do to stop this?

We are to remember how we were when we first loved Him so that we can repent and return to our first love. The cry of our hearts must be, “All I want is more of you, Jesus. Nothing else compares with You. Nothing can satisfy as You can. Nothing is more precious than You.”

### Today’s Prayers:

- Pray for churches and believers, that those of us who have left our first love will humble ourselves to acknowledge that we have fallen short of His glory, and that it is time we return to His first love, and to do the very first works that we are called to do with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit with vitality and liveliness.
- Pray for the Parliament of Malaysia, the ultimate legislative body which is formed by the upper house (Dewan Negara) and the lower house (Dewan Rakyat), that they will take extreme precaution in the issues of passing, amending and repealing acts of law before submitting to the Yang-di-Pertuan Agong, that whatever bills passed after debates and further approved by the Agong will be conducive to bringing greater advancement in the society as a whole.

## Return to Our First Love

The third thing to notice is that He gives a warning - Jesus calls us to repent and return to our first love.

The teachings of grace today are often borderline compromise and antinomianism (anti-Law). It causes many to live too casually and without a clear conviction of the demands of a Holy God who loves deeply. Jesus warns us, “If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.” (Revelation 2:5b)

Today our desire for comfort demands for shorter sermons, or sermons that don’t probe our inner lives. We want to hear “nice” things said about ourselves. We don’t want accountability. We love titles and fame. When we don’t like what we are told, we go to the next church.

We have become connoisseurs of church worship services and sermons. Parents keep lowering the bar of commitment to the Lord for their children while the culture around us invades their mindsets and worldviews. Marriage has lost its meaning in a “self-first” culture. The list goes on.

There is a famine of the Word and for clear prophetic voices. We have fallen far from our first love - a love that honours not only a loving and saving God, but also one who is holy and just. Once our lampstand is gone, so goes the light that shines in a dark culture and equally dark world.

We repent and return so that we can burn bright for His glory and honour.

### Today’s Prayers:

- Ask God to forgive us if we have been indifferent to the things and voice of God. Pray for our spiritual ears to be sensitive and open to hear His prophetic words, that the famine of the Word of God will be over and that we can enjoy soaking ourselves in His presence and seeking Him with all our hearts.
- Pray for the Ministry of Finance that whatever financial legislation and regulations made under the ministry will be conducive to the overall financial and economic growth of the nation, and that the fiscal Malaysian Federal Budget prepared will benefit all stakeholders.

## Shine in the Darkness

We must hear what the Spirit says and keep alive the intensity of our love for the Lord.

The danger is that we turn our love for Jesus into a duty instead of a delight.

Our first love is our devotion to Jesus. It is a devotion that is fervent, personal and uninhibited.

We lose it when we take Him, His word, His Love and holiness for granted; and when we get careless in the way we live. When faith becomes a routine, we may be serving God without adoring Him.

Our works are not substitutes for love; neither is purity for passion. We must have both. It is only as we love Christ fervently that we can serve Him faithfully.

If we do not remember, repent, and

return, then the warning of Him removing our lampstand is a frightening reality. History teaches us that when the believers and the Church lose their first love, they lose their effectiveness, influence and possibly even their existence. This happened to the church in Ephesus. There is no church at Ephesus today. Turkey, where all seven churches were located, is more than 98% Muslim today.

What is true for Turkey is also true elsewhere. Countless churches disappear every year. Many lampstands have been removed. This is serious - no love, no light! The church that loses its love will soon lose its light, no matter how big our Sunday Services are, how fantastic our stage and worship or how doctrinally strong we are.

Let us return to our first love and let it shine in the midst of darkness.

### Today's Prayers:

- As God searches our minds and hearts and gives to each one of us according to our works, pray that our lives, prayers, fruit we bear, and works we do would serve to be a pleasing aroma to God so that we are blessed with authority as we minister to the nation.
- Pray for the Ministry of Youth & Sport, that it will forge a stronger partnership with different entities to promote youth development and enrichment through sports training and education, and enable youth with former crimes or offences to be re-skilled and up-skilled so that they can cope with the demands of their industries.



# Day 9-13

## The Faithful Restored

*(Revelation 2:8-11)*

<sup>8</sup> *“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: ‘The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.*

<sup>9</sup> *“I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.*

<sup>10</sup> *Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

<sup>11</sup> *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.’*

## Jesus, the Eternal and Risen One

*Revelation 2:8 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: ‘The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.’”*

The church in Smyrna is one of only two churches among the seven of which Jesus had no criticism. While many of the other churches had made compromises, the church of Smyrna remained a faithful body of believers. They were steadfast in their devotion even under the threat of intense persecution.

The letter to them (Revelation 2:8-11) begins by telling them two things about Christ. Firstly, that He is the “first and last,” and secondly, that He “died and came to life.” The first points to the eternal nature of Christ - He transcends time. The second points to the resurrection power of Christ - He has overcome death. Time and death are under His complete control.

“When will our suffering end? How much longer, O Lord? Will this cost us our lives?” a Smyrnaean Christian may ask. Here Christ reminds them: I am eternal and I am risen. That is enough.

Mark chapters 13 to 16 chronicles Jesus’ final days on earth and His journey to the cross. The Eternal One entered time and tasted death for our sake. When we look at the cross we see proof of his faithfulness to us. When we look at His Resurrection, the ultimate restoration, we know that in His time, the faithful shall be restored.

Jesus is Eternal. Jesus is Risen. Jesus is faithful. In Him we place our hope.

### Today’s Prayers:

- Pray that God will remove any fears of the Church in relation to rejection or persecution, and empower His Church with boldness and strength to do the right things, and to live to please Him and to obey His Word in all circumstances.
- Pray for the Ministry of Defence, that both the civilian and Malaysian Armed Forces will be well-structured and strengthened to defend our country, and that, under its supervision, the weapons system acquisition programmes will run properly each time with a thorough and careful evaluation and demonstration in place to make sure that budgets are well-spent.

## Jesus Knows

*Revelation 2:9 “I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.”*

To have to face one challenge at a time can sometimes be more than enough. The church of Smyrna did not have the luxury of that. They faced multiple challenges from every side all at the same time. We see three mentioned here in vs.9: tribulation, poverty, and slander.

**Tribulation** - life had become increasingly difficult for them because they were mistreated by the ruling authorities, i.e. the Roman Empire. They had refused to burn incense and confess “Caesar is Lord,” and were therefore persecuted. **Poverty** - falling out of favour with the authorities meant loss of economic security. Their goods could be confiscated, their business closed down, their houses

raided. **Slander** - the Jews in that region had Rome’s favour and could offer them some relief. Yet the Romans chose not to and slandered them instead.

It was in the midst of all this that Christ said to them, “*I know...*”. When we suffer, we often feel we are alone in it. But here Jesus assures us that He knows. He really does. Right from the day of His birth, Jesus faced trials, temptations and opposition from every side. However, unlike us, who often fail - He overcame. Furthermore, as long as we remain in Christ, we too, will overcome. Jesus knows. Summing up, in knowing Him more we shall find strength and courage to face the days ahead, come what may.

### Today’s Prayers:

- Pray that churches and Christians all over Malaysia will be well equipped in Spirit and in Truth, that we will not be ignorant of all sorts of threats and forces that we are being exposed to or expose ourselves to.
- Pray for the Ministry of Transport that it will do well in its entrusted responsibilities, i.e., formulation and implementation of land, air and sea transport policies, to ensure that the safety and effectiveness of the transportation systems are secure for the general public, and that the efficiency of public transport services can be further improved and enhanced.

## Do Not Fear

*Revelation 2:10* “Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

Prison and death. Two of the most horrible things a person could ever face in their lifetime. Jesus knew this and, to prepare His church, He countered with two commands of His own: Firstly “Do not fear” and secondly, “Be faithful.” Let us look at the first one today.

Do not fear. Noted to be the most repeated command in the entire Bible. A fearful heart is a place where faith begins to wither and die.

And so Jesus told them: Suffering would come and even imprisonment. He didn't say He would stop it. However, He did reveal to them that it was a test. In addition

to that, every test has a purpose attached: be it to establish, to check, to measure, etc. So being a “test” simply means this: the suffering is not meaningless, there is a purpose to it - a good redemptive purpose.

Is this possible? For pain to bring forth joy? For evil to bring forth goodness? One only needs to look to the Cross to get the answer for that. We see that the greatest suffering ever to be experienced by one man brought forth the greatest goodness for all mankind. His suffering opened the way for our salvation. Fear not for there is hope and meaning in all that we suffer for His sake.

### Today's Prayers:

- Pray that churches and Christians in Malaysia will see opportunities in the midst of any crises, dangers, threats, suffering or pain, and that we will continue to train ourselves in godliness and righteousness, always prepared to give a reason for the faith we profess, and to stand firm upon our conviction and not yield to any forces or pressures.
- Pray for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that it would fulfil its mission as the team formulates and conducts foreign policies that help to advance and safeguard the interests of our nation by strengthening bilateral, multilateral and ASEAN diplomacy with the respective nations.

## Be Faithful Unto Death

*Revelation 2:10b "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life."*

*Luke 12:4 "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do."*

To be a Christian in Smyrna meant you had to be ready to face anything - even death. You could lose your comfort (from tribulation), your wealth (from poverty), and your reputation (from slander), and your freedom (from imprisonment). Finally, you could lose your very life.

What does Jesus say to the church of Smyrna in facing these hardships? If Jesus had told them to flee from Smyrna and emigrate to another less hostile and comfortable place, it would probably make sense. Yet, Jesus says to them, "Be faithful." And they were faithful to their call - to be salt and light in a place as pagan

and insufferable as Smyrna. They chose to be a witness for Christ even if it would cost them everything.

Smyrna mattered to God. The people there mattered to God. He had placed the church there as part of His divine plan.

Fast forward today: Malaysia matters to God. The people here matter to God. He has placed you and me here too, as part of His divine plan. We are the church of Malaysia. May we be faithful in all that He has called us to - even if it costs us, especially, if it costs us, everything. Jesus is worth it.

### Today's Prayers:

- Pray that churches and believers in Christ will come to recognize our unique role in His divine plan over our land and our nation, and that we will be faithful in our calling, and be willing to lose everything for the sake of Christ and the Gospel.
- Pray that the Ministry in the Prime Minister's Department in the Sabah and Sarawak Affairs Division will serve as an effective agent to mend any broken relationship and trust between the Federal Government and the East Malaysians, and that it shall strengthen the cooperation of both parties, that all will have a greater unity in purpose and vision for the nation as a whole.

## The Final Restoration

*Revelation 2:11* “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.”

*Luke 21:19* By your endurance you will gain your lives.

Christ’s final encouragement to the church of Smyrna is a promise. A promise that the second death, the eternal damnation after physical death, shall not cause them any pain or suffering whatsoever. Why was this important? It’s because it helped focus their minds on the eternal and imperishable - on things above and not of this earth.

Church history tells us of the first bishop of Smyrna. He was a man named Polycarp (c.a 69AD to 156AD). In his old age, he was arrested and sentenced to death for his faith. At his execution he was given the chance to recant. All that was needed was for him to confess, “Caesar is Lord,” and burn some incense to the statue of Caesar. The Bishop would have none of it. He answered, “Eighty-six years I

have served Christ, and He never did me any wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?” He was executed and died a martyr.

Jesus was never one to hide what it might cost to be faithful to Him. Yet He promised His disciples that those who endure shall gain their lives (Luke 21:19). Therefore, the believer can take heart that the most powerful enemy, death, has been conquered by Christ. The victory has been won. In the end the faithful will be restored. In the end, the dead in Christ will rise again and death will be swallowed up in victory and the saints shall reign with Him for eternity.

Simply put, in the end, we win.

### Today’s Prayers:

- In Christ we are more than conquerors and the second death shall have no power over us. Pray that we will be confident of who we are as children of God, living in the eschatological and eternal perspective. Pray that we will be able to stand firm to the very end, winning lives as we champion the message of the Gospel.
- Pray for the media sector, e.g. television, radio, newspapers and all kinds of web-based media, to be channels that communicate and convey facts or truth and not fake news or biased views, and for journalists and the general public to have good discernment and sense of justice and righteousness as they present and make comments publicly.

# Day 14-18

## The Sharp Two-Edged Sword

*(Revelation 2:12-17)*

<sup>12</sup> *“And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: ‘The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.*

<sup>13</sup> *“‘I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.*

<sup>14</sup> *But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality.*

<sup>15</sup> *So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.*

<sup>16</sup> *Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.*

<sup>17</sup> *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.’*

## The Sharp Two-Edged Sword

*Revelation 2:12 “And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: ‘The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.*

*John 1:1, 14 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ...*

In the beginning, Jesus was the Word who became flesh. In the Book of Revelation, Jesus is described as having the sharp two-edged sword. The sword is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17).

Pergamum was a strong centre of paganism and heathenism where wickedness, idolatry and immorality abounded. Thus, Christians there had much to overcome. The characteristic title that Jesus used - the sharp, double-edged sword - spoke of issues in the Church that had to be dealt with by the sword of His mouth.

Like Christians in Pergamum, you may be going to church regularly. However, have influences of the world around you

affected your Christian life? Do you find yourself not placing God in the centre of your life? Take some time to reflect on your Christian life today.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Do you have issues in life that need to be dealt with through the Word of God? Let God’s Word penetrate deeply like a sharp sword through all your defences and deceptions and allow all things in your life to be laid bare before Him.

### Today’s Prayers:

- Pray that we will saturate ourselves in God’s word daily, allowing His word to expose every sin in our lives, transform us and deal with issues we have laid before Him in our times of personal reflection.
- Pray that the Ministry of International Trade and Industry will make Malaysia one of the preferred investment destinations and also one of the most globally competitive trading nations by attracting quality investment, production of high value-added goods and services and elevating our status in the competitive global trade.



## Remaining True to His Name

*Revelation 2:13 “I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. (NKJV)”*

Jesus had a commendation for the church in Pergamum. Despite the fact that the church was placed in the midst of a city where Satan dwelt, Jesus praised it for bearing testimony for the Lord.

Jesus knew their works. The church remained true to His name and did not deny Him in spite of the persecutions they were facing.

Jesus spoke of one of their martyrs, Antipas, whose name aptly described his faith. Anti (meaning “against”) and pas (meaning “all”) – Antipas stood up against all who were persecuting him.

Today, as believers, we are living in a time where many are increasingly turning

away from God and turning to all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and of the eyes, and pride of life.

As a Christian, do you have a testimony to share of Jesus amongst your family members, in your workplace and in your community? Are you just a Sunday Christian or are you able to detach yourself from the ways of the world seven days a week?

Jesus is looking for disciples who will hold fast to His name in spite of all that is going on around us. Remember, a person who denies the faith is worse than an unbeliever (1 Timothy 5:8).

### Today’s Prayers:

- Pray that the Holy Spirit will fill you afresh today, enabling you to remain true to His name. Let not your faith be weakened by the temptations that the world brings to you everyday.
- Pray for the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs that it will practice integrity in its control over goods and prices in the local trade markets as it considers and protects the rights of all consumers.

## A Compromised Lifestyle

*Revelation 2:14 But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. (NKJV)*

Jesus said that He had a few things against the church in Pergamum. The word few or “oglios” meant that those things were small in quantity. Nevertheless, despite the glowing commendation Jesus had for the church, Jesus knew that they were already compromising their belief and behaviour by allowing the influence of pagan beliefs and behaviour to creep into the church and their lives. Satan’s tactic was to poke little holes into the doctrine of the church, holes that were so little that perhaps they did not notice them at all.

Balaam allowed compromise into his life. In public, he told everyone that he could not go beyond the word of God or

to do less or more. Yet, privately, he was yearning to meet Balak and earn the gold and silver he was publicly decrying. It took a donkey to open his eyes to let him know what an “ass” he had been.

Compromise means the expedient acceptance of standards that are lower than desirable. Anything that we do that is below God’s standards is a compromise. Think of your behaviour and lifestyle as a submarine deep under the sea. Compromise is like a few small holes appearing in the hull of the submarine, hardly noticeable at first, but if not dealt with over time, will eventually result in the hull being crushed by the high pressure of the deep sea.

### Today’s Prayers:

- Pray for yourself by committing every aspect of your life to Jesus. In areas of your life where you have lowered your Christian standards and allowed compromise to set in, confess them before the Lord and ask for His grace to help you rededicate your life to Him.
- Pray for the Polis Diraja Malaysia (PDRM) in Bukit Aman under the Inspector-General of Police (IGP), that the police enforcement teams will help maintain the public safety, security and prosperity of our nation through their professionalism and quality services.

## When Deeds become Doctrine

*Revelation 2:15-16 Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. (NKJV)*

In Jesus' letter to the church of Ephesus, He commended them for their common hate of the deeds of the Nicolaitans. The Nicolaitans were "Conquerors or Destroyers of the People". Their deeds referred to the eating of idol meats and engaging in sexual immorality. Their deeds became doctrines as they taught that immorality, fornication and idolatry were permissible under the grace of God. Sin was rampant at that time as Paul's doctrine of the grace of God was abused.

If you think that the doctrine of the Nicolaitans belonged in history to the time of the church of Pergamum only, think again. The doctrine of the Nicolaitans is alive and well today.

Christians today have lowered their

standards of belief and behaviour. Some are saying: "We shouldn't be so narrow-minded" advocating for the LGBTQ community to be accepted. "We must be part of the world if we want to win it," so worship becomes more like pop concerts. "We should have fun," so it becomes okay to celebrate Halloween. "We should hold fast to our traditions," so what is wrong in dabbling in a bit of "feng shui" (geomancy)? These are but a few examples of how the world today is Pergamum all over again.

Jesus' message to the church of Pergamum is just as relevant to the church in Malaysia today. Repent, otherwise the consequence for disobedience shall war against us with the sword of Christ's words.

### Today's Prayers:

- Pray for your own church and church leaders for the necessity of sound doctrine to be preached at the pulpit. Pray for yourself that you would hear the word of God through your heart and allow the word to shape your standard of belief and behaviour.
- Pray for the Ministry of Home Affairs, that it will further improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their public duties, especially in the areas of law enforcement, public security and order, national registration, foreign workers control, anti-drug initiatives, immigration affairs, etc., to secure the safety and rights of all citizens and society as a whole.

## God's Promise for Overcomers

*Revelation 2:17 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it." (NKJV)*

The Greek Word "Nikao" or "overcome" is used extensively by the Apostle John. To overcome is to conquer, overpower, prevail, triumph or be victorious as in a contest or military conquest.

What is Jesus calling the church in Pergamum to overcome? Basically, everything unholy and unrighteous.

As Christians, to overcome means that we are called to keep straight and clean in a corrupt and sinful world and to lead a life with uncompromising beliefs. John wrote that we can be an overcomer because:

- He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world. (1 John 4:4)

- The word of God abides in us and gives us strength. (1 John 2:14)
- We believe that Jesus is the Son of God. (1 John 5:5)
- Of the blood of the Lamb and of our testimonies, and that we do not love our lives to the death. (Revelation 12:11)

Jesus promises overcomers the hidden manna and a white stone with a new name on it. In John 6:51, Jesus said that He is the living bread and all who eat of it will have eternal life. The white stone with a new name is said to be the imputed holiness and righteousness of overcomers with whom Jesus will establish a personal intimacy. What a beautiful promise awaits for overcomers.

### Today's Prayers:

- Pray for yourselves to be overcomers, holding tightly to Jesus' promise that those who overcome shall inherit all things and Jesus will be your God and we will be His sons and daughters (Revelation 21:7).
- Pray for good educators to be recruited, and that there will be a thorough reformation and overhaul in all levels of education, pre-school to tertiary, whether they are under public, private, international or homeschooling systems, and that they will produce technically competent, knowledgeable, constructive workers with good communication skills and professionalism; morally responsible for their personal lives, environment, relationships and assignments.

# Day 19-23

## The Power of Holiness and the Prophetic

*(Revelation 2:18-29)*

<sup>18</sup> *“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: ‘The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.*

<sup>19</sup> *“I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first.*

<sup>20</sup> *But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.*

<sup>21</sup> *I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality.*

<sup>22</sup> *Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works,*

<sup>23</sup> *and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works.*

<sup>24</sup> *But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden.*

<sup>25</sup> *Only hold fast what you have until I come.*

<sup>26</sup> *The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations,*

<sup>27</sup> *and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father.*

<sup>28</sup> *And I will give him the morning star.*

<sup>29</sup> *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’*

## Empowering a Spiritually Disciplined Lifestyle

There are rules of life stipulated in the Bible to secure a lifestyle of holiness. They empower us from the inside out to know Him and His destiny for a nation. Yet, keeping the rules of life does demand a totally surrendered discipline. By nature we are pleasure seekers and not seekers of God. However, God is deeply satisfied with a Christian who lives a totally surrendered and disciplined life. That is empowering.

A personal prayer altar set apart daily for God is explicitly stipulated in Deuteronomy 17:18-20 and is the fundamental foundation necessary for any leader or believer. When this rule is broken, human desires dominate. A glimpse into the lives of King Saul, Solomon, and David illustrates this well. Holiness is where God connects and, through His prophetic warnings, He reveals the destiny of a nation that does not daily commune with Him.

Reading through the Scripture today, the feeling of uncertainty and spirit of fear the disciples must have felt float in the air. Jesus had resurrected from the dead, and appeared to his disciples. Belief and hope sparked within them. The ten days of waiting for the Holy Spirit's empowerment to witness sets a new and fresh spirit on the road to revival. Peter was restored and empowered.

The church of Thyatira in Revelation 3:18-29 reminds us of our spiritual perception today. Yes, we have our church activities and events and are programme-driven, but how about our spiritual condition? Everyone is accountable to God. God knows every individual's dark secret. Return to God, surrender totally to Him and He will heal your relationship with Him.

### Today's Prayers:

- Pray that Christians in our nation will make a firm and sincere decision to surrender fully to God; that dysfunctional or broken families will seek forgiveness from each other so that they will be healed and restored; that churches will rise up to their call of holiness.
- Pray for positive and revolutionary changes to be made in the Education Ministry so that our education system and the academic curriculum will be inclusive, values-driven, meeting the international standard and quality, and helping to prepare and empower schools and students to be at the cutting edge in the age of IR4.0, nurturing and producing a generation who knows their citizenship rights and responsibilities and holds noble values and ethics.

## Live With Godliness

Disciplining ourselves for the purpose of godliness means to intentionally coach ourselves for godliness. It suggests that our entire self-attitude, behavior, and values be vigorously engaged in the pruning process. This pruning process is with a purpose and is intentionally preparing ourselves to face our inner and external struggles for the present and the future.

Discipline strengthens and builds up our faith-muscles so that we can better endure our daily tests and trials of life to withstand temptations. It is required to mold our character and behavior, thus bearing long lasting fruit. The godliness resulting from such discipline is truly profitable for influencing others.

God looks for men of good reputation, filled with the Holy Spirit, and wisdom

(Acts 6:3). The prophetic wave of the Spirit of God to Thyatira to repent from sexual immorality (Revelation 2:21) is a strong warning to us today. How can a nation respond to God in order to gain back righteousness?

This begins with you saturating your life with the Word of God. You have had enough grace to make it halfway through this journey of 40 days of fasting. Never give up. Rework your personal boundaries to minimize distractions from your personal time with God. As you read the Word of God, take another 30 minutes to reflect on your reading and internalize the words that you have captured. Apply what you have learned today and do your best for others. Refuse to make negative remarks about others.

### Today's Prayers:

- Pray for wisdom and understanding as we reflect on today's message, and that opportunities will be provided for us to bless others as well as start a family or market place altar.
- Pray for the Ministry of Works (KKR) which is responsible for public works, the highway authority, construction industries, and relevant professionals such as engineers, architects and quantity surveyors that it will deliver infrastructure and development projects that are cost-effective, sustainable, quality assured and globally competitive.

## Wisdom in Living Life through the Eyes of God

We live in challenging times. When times are uncertain, foundations are shaken. Dr. John Mulinde wrote in his book, *The Midnight Call*; “God moves in waves. He did it in Egypt, and that is what He is doing today; wave after wave. With His every wave, He is targeting something. Every wave is targeting somebody. Every wave is speaking to someone.”

When we have weak foundations, we will live shallow lives. Many do not see through the eyes of God. We gravitate towards speculations, and euphoric happenings within the shortest possible time. The shallowness of our generation is particularly reflected in our shallowness in the Word of God. When waves of trouble or dissatisfaction seep into the church, we opt for the convenience of church-hopping. Engaging in reading the Word of

God may be a painstaking discipline, but it is through this discipline that wisdom in living life is appropriated.

In today’s reading of Acts 12, Herod’s death ends the season of persecution in Jerusalem. Luke adds in one of his typical summaries, “the Word of God increased and multiplied.” (v.24) The focus of history is about to shift to Paul and to his mission to the whole world. Wisdom in living life through the eyes of God is a perspective that is given to us as we study the Word of God. When we see as God sees, we will do as God says.

May we ask God for refreshing counsel from the Holy Spirit in today’s reading, that we will have understanding and strategy to face our current “wave of shaking.”

### Today’s Prayers:

- Pray for Christian families in our nation to have intentional clarity in discipling our next generation, so that the Church as a whole will be able to be built up and fortified with a deeper faith.
- Pray for the Attorney General’s Chambers in Malaysia, that it will serve its vision and mission well in being the advisory body to the Malaysian government, and that it will be vigorous, credible and proactive in carrying out its roles and functions that are stated in Article 145 of the Federal Constitution.



## Faith Produces Fruit

Faith is a vital part of Christianity. It operates by putting full trust in Jesus, unmixed with any other creeds and any reliance on law or individual ‘works of righteousness.’ Faith when acted upon will produce fruit in spite of any adverse circumstances. James focuses on perseverance, a fruit that is necessary to handle “turbulent waves” coming to our lives as well as to the nation. We need the tenacity of perseverance to wait upon the Lord and to advance with courage.

As you read the letter of James, it will answer questions of faith. In Acts 15, at the Jerusalem Council, a serious debate was raised on the foundation of truth. The ultimate goal from the Pharisees was to impose the Mosaic Law, and thus Judaism to the Gentile believers. The visible act is “circumcision”. Must Gentiles adopt

a lifestyle laid out in the Mosaic Law? Paul and Barnabas were appointed, with others, as delegation to attend the Council to resolve this issue with the apostles and elders.

James emerged as leader and summed up the sense of the Council succinctly (Acts 15:12-18). He quoted God’s words from Amos 9:11-12, showing that God predicted the salvation of the Gentiles as Gentiles (without the need to convert to Judaism). The Jewish church should have then accepted their Gentile brothers for who they were, without insisting that they adopt Jewish practices. They shouldn’t have made it difficult for the Gentiles who were turning to God. The Jerusalem Council dealt with the basic issue so that freedom from the law would lead to a new and dynamic righteousness for all.

### Today’s Prayers:

- Pray that youth and children will be inspired to read the Word of God consistently as their daily lifestyle so that faith and hearing of the prophetic voice of God will be advanced forward.
- Pray for the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) to continue to uphold integrity, honesty and citizens’ rights in the process of the investigating and prosecuting of corruption cases in both the public and private sectors, forming independent and fair findings and perspectives for all stakeholders.

- Galatians 1-6  
 Acts 17

## Losing our Grip on Holiness

“Losing our Grip,” means losing our control of life. It implies a surrendered life that has been given in to “worldliness”. It is a result of living out the pride of life and materialism with a humanistic benchmark. When things do not turn out the way we planned or envisaged, we get disappointed or frustrated, and even resort to a selfish agenda.

Why are we not to lose our grip on holiness? We stand secure in Christ knowing that the outcome is not dependent on our efforts, performances, or peoples’ promises. Therefore, we have every reason to be thankful to God and put God at the center of all we do in life.

By reading today’s scripture, perhaps we will realign our focus. Paul announces,

“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” (Galatians 5:1) How can we stand firm on holiness? Paul’s explanation is based on a truth introduced in Galatians 2:20, “Christ who lives in me.” Our relationship with God as sons or daughters means that we share His hereditary. The life of holiness within responds to the Spirit and must be lived by faith. The old, identified here as the “old nature,” is lived in response to law.

Law has never produced love within our hearts. Thus, if we follow the Spirit as He leads and depend on the strength He provides, we will not “gratify the desires of our sinful nature”.

### Today’s Prayers:

- Pray that we will continue to stand firm with a completely surrendered and disciplined lifestyle to battle against daily temptations and distractions so that churches will be able to reach out to our communities with love and the demonstration of the fruit of the Holy Spirit.
- Pray for the Ministry of Rural Development that it will help the 7.3 million people who inhabit 26,400 villages throughout Malaysia (especially in Sabah & Sarawak) so that they will have access to enhanced living conditions with at least basic amenities. Pray also that good strategies will be put in place to attract investors and further increase the economic opportunities, accessibility and viability for the rural populations.

# Day 24-29

## Awakened to be Alive

*(Revelation 3:1-6)*

<sup>1</sup> *“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: ‘The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.*

*“I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead.*

<sup>2</sup> *Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God.*

<sup>3</sup> *Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.*

<sup>4</sup> *Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy.*

<sup>5</sup> *The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.*

<sup>6</sup> *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’*

## Awakened to be Alive

The Church of Sardis had a reputation for being alive in a negative sense. She was suffering a form of sleeping sickness, a disease that mirrored a community with overconfident people and busy lifestyles. Their lack of seriousness eventually led to the city's demise twice, when enemies breached the wall and overtook the slumbering guards.

Believers enjoyed religious freedom but with overconfidence, they were heading into spiritual slumber. Jesus knew of the church's activities and programmes, but instead of being impressed by the liveliness visible to those on the outside, he admonished them with the call to "wake up". To him the church was equivalent to an almost-dead person. In our context the warning would mean 'don't fall asleep at the wheel, or don't get caught sleeping on the job.'

Like the Sardis Church, we need to avoid slumbering overconfidence and ask ourselves the following questions:

- Does my spiritual state reflect what was described of the Church in Sardis?
- Do all the programmes of the church hide the church's true spiritual state before God?
- Have we adopted a model of inoffensive Christianity that plays loosely with God's Word. Do we no longer care for the needs and suffering of the lost around us?
- Perhaps we have a reputation for being alive and active. But does God see us as dead and asleep?

In the next few days we shall attempt to examine the above questions and allow the Lord to speak to us and address the state of our spiritual health.

### Today's Prayers:

- Pray that the Holy Spirit will quicken our hearts to respond to His wake-up call and avoid the "sleeping sickness" we might have in our personal walk with God. Pray especially that we will shift our focus and priority more on the things of God that will last eternally rather than things on the earth which serve us only temporarily, that we will serve God and His purposes in our lifetime.
- Pray for the Ministry of Women and Family that its policies and directions will create a caring multiracial society that goes against the discrimination of women, and provides hope and development for the marginalized quarters, such as children, old folks, destitute, homeless, disabled and disaster victims, etc.



## Scandal in the Church

There are two kingdoms at work in life: the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God. They are intermingled, working all the time everywhere, and though you cannot separate them by sharp lines of demarcation from the standpoint of geography or personality, they are sharply separated in their philosophy.

What happened in Acts 19 was a physical clash for both kingdoms. If not for divine intervention, it would have destroyed the church at Ephesus. However, in 1 Corinthians 5, where immorality rears its head in the church, the Corinthians were not grieved and were literally permitting the events to destroy the church.

There are three basic steps we should take when confronted with such issues: a right attitude, implementing the right basis for action to take and instructing the right purpose to stop the infection from spreading, in other word - “cleanse out the

old leaven”

We are reminded to not just get rid of troublemakers but, instead, to reach out to the individuals involved and deal with them in such a way that they will see their wrongdoing and repent eventually.

The church is the bride of Christ and she needs to maintain the standards that God has given to her. She needs to recognize the unique position that she holds in the world today. When we live in victory over the forces that try to destroy others, people will begin to see that there is a meaningful purpose and reason for the salvation she professes to have.

The church leadership must stand in unity and be bold in confronting the many issues that she faces today. She must be on the search for the weakest link that can break the chain within the leadership.

### Today's Prayers:

- Pray that churches will handle and confront issues biblically, and not allow those issues to break their churches or weaken the chain of their leadership. Instead, by God's grace and wisdom, churches will take appropriate approaches in mending whatever is broken, strengthening whatever is weakened, and standing in unity for the sake of Christ. (Ecclesiastes 4:12 And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.)
- Pray that the spirit of Merdeka and the spirit of caring, sharing and working together that our predecessors had worked hard for and held on to since the time they fought for national rights and liberty will be revived among all Malaysians as we celebrate Merdeka Day 2020.

## Time to Get Serious

The city of Sardis stood high atop a hill that intersected important trade routes. The Jewish community was wealthy, influential, and was as prosperous as the rest of the city's inhabitants. Today's reading reminds us that we are in danger of falling into complacency and carelessness when we think that the success of our church activities hide the true spiritual state before God.

Jesus' words to the church to '**Awaken, and strengthen what remains**' was clearly an urgent call to be watchful or vigilant. The Lord is shaking them from their stupor and warning them of the danger they were facing. He was urging them to '**get serious**' as they were in a desperate and dangerous situation and needed to do everything to rescue or salvage what was left and also lift up the overwhelming pressures descending upon the church.

Immediate action was warranted. Just

as termites and dry rot can wipe out the skeleton of a house without any obvious external damage, the church was warned to strengthen the foundations before the house came crashing down around her.

Similarly, while the Corinth church was resourceful and gifted, internally, there were dissensions and disunity. There were also doctrinal confusion and disturbing practices and sins in that church. That explains why it became crucial for them to focus their attention on chapter 13, the canticle of love. They needed to understand that Christian love is decisive; **they must make it happen.**

Jesus' message to the churches in Sardis and Corinth that it was *time to get serious* is applicable to us today. Time is against us to put our act together; for the second coming of Christ will come like a thief in the night and we don't want to end up like the five foolish virgins.

### Today's Prayers:

- We are far from achieving the Lord's destiny for this nation. The call to pray has taken a lull after GE14 and what we see are the symptoms of complacency and carelessness. Pray that we will continue to keep the Lampstand in our churches burning brightly.
- Pray that the Ministry of Human Resources will continue to facilitate the operation of labour markets to make sure that competent, productive, responsive and resilient human capital are trained and produced. Pray that the Ministry will work effectively to enhance the employability of local workforce and that certain comprehensive, dynamic and progressive social safety nets shall be built for them.

## Holding on to the Truth

The Corinth Church was filled with self-made people. Among its citizens were many freed slaves who had worked hard to make a name and fortune for themselves and their families. Such an environment nurtured an independent, self-reliant mindset.

Paul, the Corinthians' accuser, challenged the church in the second letter to test themselves whether they are in the faith. There were some members who professed to be born again believers but were not. The kinds of things he had to face were "strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slander, gossip, arrogance, and disturbances." In addition, Paul had every reason to believe that "impurity, immorality, and sensuality" existed. These were the sins he exposed and rebuked in the past, and he feared some may not have repented of them. Even more distressing, these were also manifestations of the flesh as opposed to the fruit of the spirit.

The churchgoer who is merely going through spiritual motions will never recognize how much his own heart has wandered away from God. Jesus spoke of four kinds of soil on which the seed fell, but only one of those soil types produced a genuine belief. He also taught that weeds grow up alongside the wheat in every congregation. The implied warning is directed at those who think they are Christians, but truly are not.

To hold on to the truth is to remember what you have heard, how you received the gospel through the grace of God and to realise that you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit. Recall how you wholeheartedly received the gift of salvation with such zeal, excitement, and delight. Allow God's grace to bring to completion what was started in you and remember that you were bought with a price.

### Today's Prayers:

- No man is an island, and spiritual accountability provides an avenue for a spiritual checkup. Pray that we will adopt a submissive spirit and be transparent to the body of Christ, and that by praying in the Spirit and abiding in the Word, we will gain wisdom and understanding and magnify Christ in all situations.
- Pray that the Ministry of the Plantation Industries and Commodities will work efficiently in enlargement of our international markets for the export of our local commodities, e.g., palm oil, rubber, timber, furniture, cocoa, pepper, etc., and to increase the export earnings of our country as a whole.

- 2 Corinthians 11-13
- Romans 1-5

## Active Obedience

In the last three chapters of 2 Corinthians, Paul affirmed his apostolic position against the false teachers. However, he expressed his concern for the Corinthians since he did not take advantage of his position. To boast of his suffering became the testimony to defend his Jewish heritage. Though they may have regarded Paul as *weak*, he had planned to **build** them up rather than to **tear** them down in his next visit.

In His fourth command, Jesus exhorted the Church of Sardis to be obedient and know that the coming of the Lord (parousia) will be like a **thief** in the night. Be prepared to face judgment or be destroyed. The Lord's coming as a **thief** both unexpected (stealthy) and uninvited will have serious consequences, and may be more severe than what Jesus taught in John 10:10 that referred to the devil. The King will arrive in all his glory to judge and to reward.

*Romans 5:19 For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.*

Obedience that demands action is active waiting, serving the living and true God. Obedience is the key that opens the floodgates of God's love so that we are supplied with strength to love the way the Bible asks us to.

We will certainly face the pressures of a hostile world in terms of morality and conflicts in our community life. However, by far the greatest pressure of all is to lose sight of the coming of our Savior. Our job is to keep in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:25), and make our lives a vibrant testimony to the gospel.

### Today's Prayers:

- Let the words of this hymn be our prayer. *"Trust and obey, for there's no other way, to be happy with Jesus, but to trust and obey."*
- Pray that the Ministry of Tourism, Art and Culture will continue to promote Malaysia to be a world-class tourism and cultural destination and that the Ministry shall be creative and resourceful to come up with good ideas and plans to make its vision and missions possible.





## Cloak of Repentance

Not every Christian in Sardis had “stained their clothes”. The faithful in Sardis who were given white robes had been made right and just before God. They should not have lost sight of the fact that the robes were given as a gift, and that they did not justify themselves by good works, having been made spiritually right by the work of Christ.

Repentance is to repudiate what is not true and repent of the sin. It is moving away from nominal faith that looks alive but, in reality, is dead. They needed to repent of their hypocrisy and of the sin of living on a dead reputation. They needed to go back to their purpose of being a Lampstand for Christ and the gospel. It was also vital that they repented remorsefully because a true change of mind and heart is necessary for a genuine and consistent walk with the Lord.

Remnants who had not soiled their clothes, and who had been watchful and alert were regarded as worthy. Their clothes were clean and white which signifies purity. It takes a broken and contrite heart to accept these clothes willingly and readily. They became a testimony and were not ashamed of the gospel.

Christians today must avoid the Sardis trap. Although some equate activity in a church with spiritual life, God sees through the hustle and bustle, and ascertains the hearts of His people. We must not reflect the culture around us and must be prepared to make a difference. Christians who enjoy religious freedom must shun the overconfidence that would tempt them to spiritually slumber.

### Today’s Prayers:

- Remember: to be faithful demands foregoing what the world has to offer. Pray for the Lord’s protection and strength to keep our eyes upon Jesus who is the author and finisher of the faith, that we will remain unsoiled and undefiled spiritually so that we can be called worthy for the wedding day of the Lamb of God.
- Pray that the Ministry of Communications and Multimedia will fulfil its plans to build a reliable, affordable, and accessible telecommunication infrastructure all over Malaysia, and be successful in its drive to harness digital economy and ICT to transform the country into one with a developed nation status, and that it will attain its aim to strengthen the regulation of a reliable and stable communications and multimedia ecosystem.

# Day 30-34

## An Open Door No One Can Shut

*(Revelation 3: 7-13)*

<sup>7</sup> *“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.*

<sup>8</sup> *“I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.*

<sup>9</sup> *Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you.*

<sup>10</sup> *Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.*

<sup>11</sup> *I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.*

<sup>12</sup> *The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, 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 from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.*

<sup>13</sup> *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’*

## God's Open Door, Fear Not!

When we are afraid to let God take charge, we fear losing control. The source of this fear is from not knowing God. J.I Packer in his book, *Knowing God*, says that those who know their God will have great boldness, ceaseless passion to serve, great thoughts of God, and great contentment in Him. Hence, we need to know God!

The fear of letting God take charge started when our knowledge of God was compromised or syncretized by the Eden Fall (Genesis 3). Fallen humanity is now totally disorientated and in a spiritual coma. Thus, the chain-reaction results in us losing the focus on knowing God and His destiny in our lives. Responding to the call of letting God take charge re-orientates us with a passion to know the God of the Bible.

Paul was called by God to reach out to the Gentiles and disciple them. His task demanded coherence in his full dependence on the Holy Spirit, his clear focus on God's calling, and his faith. The Lord opened doors. Paul ventured with boldness and served selflessly.

Reading today's scriptures, here are some questions that may help you reflect on your relationship with God. What did God do that kept Paul moving on? What are the basic attitudes towards others that will help to build a healthy community? Paul spells that out - a people of radical transformation. They were passionate, had a deep understanding about God, were bold in reaching out, and believed that no one could shut the door except for God, Himself.

### Today's Prayers:

- Pray that Christians will make a firm and sincere decision to fully return to God and be free from any fear of uncertainties (e.g. politics, economy, climate, diseases, etc.), and that the Church as a whole will have a spiritual hunger and thirst after God.
- Pray for the Ministry of Federal Territories which oversees the administration of mosques and religious bodies in the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya and Labuan, that they will help to establish the government's policies on Islam that seek to build harmony and tolerance among all races and religious groups.



## Grip on God's Destiny

The apostle Paul was warned of the dangers ahead. However, he was firm. He knew his purpose in serving God and that his destiny was a spiritual battlefield. Many churches were established in Asia and Europe through him. Now the apostle will fulfill the other part of the mission to which God originally called him: "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel." (Acts 9:15)

The vitally important point is the coherent pursuit of the call of God. The calling of God is the doing. The goal is to fulfill His destiny of life. The destiny is the process towards its end goal. The battleground is found along the way of our destiny – we tend to be vulnerable, we face challenges, and there will be sacrifices. It operates under the love of God and His

grace. Fear and death holds no weight. Dr. John Mulinde, in his book, Pursuing God's Destiny, succinctly remarked, "God has a blueprint of how your life should run. He wants you to end as a person redeemed from the world...." God has a plan beyond physical death.

The closure of the book of Acts 24-28 paints the tapestry of God's destiny for Paul's life on earth. In every stroke of his brush, he recounts vividly about his boldness, fearless adventures, and a sacrificial discourse, no matter how dangerous it would be. How does God want you to live for Him? To know one's destiny is to know God. "Are your ears awake? Listen, listen to the "Wind Words" of the Holy Spirit blowing through..." (Rev. 3:13). Read today's scriptures and reflect.

### Today's Prayers:

- Pray to God for the salvation of your loved ones, and your influence of Christ to others in the marketplace, your neighbourhood and your circles of friendship, etc., and for the gospel of the Kingdom of God to impact your communities.
- Pray for the entire Malaysian court and judiciary system, where Magistrates Court, Sessions Court, High Court, Court of Appeal and Federal Court have been established at every level of hierarchical courts, that they shall function in transparency and consistency in hearing of cases, interpreting and guiding of laws and making of fair and sound judgment.

## A Redemptive Journey

The church of Philadelphia in Revelation 3:7-13 reminds us of the spiritual perception today. The Church operates with power-sermons, bible studies, activities and mission work, but how about our spiritual quotient? God knows the “dark secrets” of mankind. Be aware, Judgment Day will come where we will have to give an account of our life for Him. We must strive to make an amply good accounting.

We need to see discipleship as a redemptive journey. When Jesus died on the cross, it is not just to forgive our sins and free us from the judgment of God. His death is to redeem everything that we have lost. Holding on to our “dark secrets” – the sins of immorality, adultery, pornography, covetousness, bribery, etc. - will lead to bondage and a wounded soul. However, allowing God to deal with the inner “dark secrets” of life brings liberation, healing and restoration. Paul summarizes clearly,

“so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.” (Colossians 2:7)

Discipleship is also a redemptive journey that is rooted in a lifestyle of saturating oneself in the Word of God. (Matthew 4:4) It is living a good and godly life empowered by His Word and the Holy Spirit to overcome daily temptation from Satan.

How can you have a redemptive lifestyle? First, surrender and say, “Yes, LORD.” He will begin to do what you can’t do. He will begin to draw you in ways you can’t draw yourself. You will realize your love for God abounds. Confess your “dark secrets” and ask for His forgiveness. Declare aloud to break the soul-tie of the “dark secrets” of your life and move on to live for Him.

### Today’s Prayers:

- Pray that God will heal your wounded soul, restore any dysfunctional relationships in your family, and bring forth healing of racial and religious tensions in our communities and nation.
- Pray that the Chief Justice of the Federal Court will have insight and foresight in appointing and dismissal of judges, commissioners for Oaths and members of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, as well as in making policies and managing the judiciary, so that the judiciary system will be a highly independent branch that adds to the strength, growth, peace and prosperity of the nation.

## His Power at Work within Us

*“Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:20-21)*

The church of Philadelphia is characterized as one with “little power’ or “little strength” (Revelation 3:8). Power can be defined as the ability or capacity to get something done in a particular way. If they had depended on their own power, the doors would have remained shut - for they had but little of it.

Yet, the wonderful thing here is this: they depended not on their own power but relied fully on Jesus by keeping His Word and not denying His Name (Revelation 3:8). His Word. His Name. At His Word it shall be done, at His name every knee shall bow. True power is not found in what we can do, but in what

Christ has already done for us.

This is the gospel message. Dead religion says depend on your own power and see what you can do. The gospel says depend on God’s power and see what He has already done for you.

It is an immeasurable, life-giving, door-opening, soul-saving power. It is a resurrection power that not even death could shut down. Additionally, the bible says this power is at work within all who are His to accomplish what we cannot even ask or imagine. So take heart. Keep His Word and be not ashamed of His Name.

### Today’s Prayers:

- Pray for churches in Malaysia to continue to rely on the power of God’s Word and His name, and not on our human strength, especially when we are well-established with gold and silver and have certain abilities and capacities to get things done easily.
- Pray for the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry as they continue with the modernization of the agricultural sector, that by up-to-date research and use of artificial intelligence, it will help create programmes to increase job opportunities and income for the farmers and fishermen.

## Entering In

*1 Timothy 4:7-8, Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.*

Our Lord Jesus opened the door for us to enter into an abundant and victorious Christian life. But we must make the decision whether to walk through it or walk away from it. God has done His part; we need to do ours.

The Apostle Paul knew this well. He knew that the believers needed to take personal responsibility for their walk with God. In the epistles to his disciples, Timothy and Titus, he expounded on the qualifications required of a good leader, instructions on how to become one as well as worthy servants of Christ. He taught them what they needed to pursue and

devote themselves to as well as what to avoid and not associate with.

How about you and me? What have we devoted ourselves to? We can occupy ourselves with countless myths and tales - superstitions that will do us no good. We can engage in a multitude of physical and sport activities that may do us some good. However, more than any of these, we are called to pursue godliness - the one thing that will do us the greatest good. For, in godliness, we enter into the eternal plans that God has for us in our lives and claim His wonderful promises.

### Today's Prayers:

- Pray that we will not occupy ourselves with all kinds of myths and tales that will not profit us spiritually. Instead let us spur one another to pursue the holiness and godliness in Christ Jesus so that we can withstand trials and temptations in our lifetime.
- Pray for the Ministry of Environment that it will continue to pursue its excellence in environmental sustainability and wealth creation through advanced science and technology, so that the whole nation will be able to enjoy an environment that is clean and free of pollution.

# Day 35-40

## Refiner's Fire. Prepare to Overcome

*(Revelation 3:14-22)*

<sup>14</sup> *“And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation.*

<sup>15</sup> *“‘I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot!*

<sup>16</sup> *So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.*

<sup>17</sup> *For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.*

<sup>18</sup> *I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.*

<sup>19</sup> *Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.*

<sup>20</sup> *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.*

<sup>21</sup> *The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.*

<sup>22</sup> *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”*



## The Bait of Wealth

Laodicea was a wealthy city with its production of black wool cloth, eye ointment and was a major banking center. The city was almost completely destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 60. It was so wealthy, self-sufficient, and proud that it refused outside help in its rebuilding. Their security was in their economic wealth and it became a stumbling block for them to pursue God and to grow in their faith.

Jesus had a word of warning for its Christian citizens: You say, 'I am rich. I have everything I want. I don't need a thing!' And you don't realize that you are wretched. Additionally, miserable and poor and blind and naked. So I advise you to buy gold from me- gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich." Rev. 3:17-18

Wealth can and will bait us to move away from our greater purpose as believers. No one starts out with the goal of turning money into a distraction or an idol. Yet acquiring possessions has an intoxicating effect on man. Jesus warned that we cannot serve both money and God; one or the other will dominate (Matthew 6:24). He also warned that it is hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. (Matthew 19:23)

Money is a gift from God, but when it becomes the center of our lives, it becomes a distraction and a lust for more that draws us away from the main purpose of being all that He has called us to be. Money begins to define us and gives us a false security and identity.

### Today's Prayers:

- Pray for the Refiner's fire to burn away the bait of wealth as we prepare to overcome, seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.
- Pray for the Ministry of Economic Affairs in its function as a central agency supervising 32 agencies, especially those directly involved in the wealth redistribution to eradicate disparities and inequalities, it will be efficacious in drawing in new investments and businesses that can take advantages of our country's well-planned infrastructure and a ready pool of skilled workers.

## Be Not Lukewarm

*“Because you’re neither hot nor cold...I am about to spit (vomit) you out of my mouth.”*

Laodicea’s water supply plays an important role in what Jesus had to say to them. The city had no fresh water supply. Water was piped in from the springs/river from 2 different cities- hot mineral springs about 8 kilometres away, in the city of Hierapolis and cold drinking water from the city of Colossae, 16 kilometres away.

By the time the hot and cold water reached Laodicea it was lukewarm and the high mineral content in the hot water would cause one to vomit it out. It was no longer useful and was no longer what it was supposed to be.

Jesus was making a powerful spiritual point: a lukewarm faith is useless! The Christian life is a call to action, to be

lived in victory; but we are susceptible to distractions and compromise.

What makes God sick? Lukewarm religion! No zeal, no enthusiasm, no passion for the Lord or the lost. No growth, no fruit and an independent spirit that is seduced by self-centredness, self-reliance, material gain and power. It is being wise in our own eyes.

Clearly, God desires a consistent “hot” believer that shows genuine fervour and leaves no question about their faith in Jesus.

Ponder on this today and consider this question honestly: Am I hot, cold or lukewarm? What are the indications?

### Today’s Prayers:

- Pray for God’s forgiveness if we do have lukewarmness in our churches, that we care-less about what God’s business is, and we care-less about the heartbeat and purpose of God for this generation and nation, and we care-less about the voice of His correction and exhortation. Pray that we will be “hot” again for Jesus and keep our spiritual fervency.
- Pray that the Ministry of Health will continue to strengthen its core capabilities to prevent, detect and respond promptly and effectively to all public health threats and that they will take priority actions recommended by the World Health Organization.

## Beware of Lukewarmness

Would you agree, in a general sense, that the Church is lukewarm today?

Jesus used very strong words when rebuking the lukewarmness of the Church in Laodecia- “I will ‘vomit’ you out”. In other words, from Jesus’ perspective, this Church was not fit for “consumption” and their condition made Him vomit. Don’t miss the imagery here.

Note the word ‘will’- Jesus will (not might) vomit them– a warning every Christian should take seriously. Jesus cannot accept ‘lukewarmness’. Now you may say that God’s grace covers it all, but it is critical to understand that grace is not an excuse to live a lukewarm faith! If we are going to be overcomers...that excuse will not stand!

Is your church comfortable, content and simply going through the motions?

Are we more concerned with how we look and so distracted with the politics of the day that we miss the mark on how to be a bright burning light to our nation?

The Church in Laodicea was not aware of how complacent their condition had become. We should recognize the potential of the downward spiral in these warnings, as we too can fall into the same pattern; even while we’re faithfully “serving” Jesus and holding to truth, our love for Him can stop being a priority. This is dangerous! Once love for God declines, so does love for His Word.

Ponder today if we are doing all we can to seek first the Kingdom of God. Is there spiritual stagnation that we need to recognize and overcome?

### Today’s Prayers:

- Pray for God to help us recognize neglected priorities in our lives that cause damage to our passion and love for God and that we will not fall into complacency when all things seem to be routine and in control.
- Pray that the National Unity and Social Well-being Division in the Prime Minister’s Department will serve well in fostering harmony among all communities, and in enhancing the status of B40 so the poor have a share in and access to the economic prosperity of our nation.

## Seeing Yet Blinded

Laodicea was well known for its special ointment (balm), which was highly effective in the treatment of various eye/visual disorders. Ironically, while Laodicea helped others to see physically, Jesus was telling them that they were blind spiritually. They couldn't see their own spiritual poverty or the fact that they had missed Jesus in their lives.

We often get so good at telling others how to “heal” their views of God and spirituality. We like to tell them what is right and wrong while not realizing that we ourselves are spiritually blind, are making compromises and have missed the Lord. In Mark 8:18a, Jesus rebuked His disciples by asking, “Do you have eyes but fail to see...?” Meaning, you can see but are void of understanding. We see and respond to things that appeal to us and reject the requirements and correct responses that God requires of us. The life we live daily

for God has to be very intentional.

It is easier to take bits of Scripture that we agree with and not “see” the rest of it. It's harder to incorporate His truths with our established worldview. We cannot please both our flesh and Jesus.

Question: In what way might this describe areas of your life? Have you had times when you felt indifferent to God or His working in your life? We think we're doing fine until God shakes us awake with situations around us that make us stop and ask, “Am I really seeing and doing what God requires of me?”

Jesus calls us to “be zealous and repent” (Rev. 3:19). His gracious promise is that He will have a loving fellowship with us, i.e. even though we are rebuked, Jesus loves us as His friends.

### Today's Prayers:

- Pray that God will remove and heal our spiritual blindness and that, as God's people, we will be sensitive to the things and mind of God and will be able to comprehend His will from His living Word as we see things with His heavenly perspectives.
- Pray for the Ministry of Housing and Local Government that easier home-ownership schemes, designed for first time home-buyers, will help lessen the burden of the younger generations, especially through rent-to-own projects for the benefit of the urban poor.



## What to Pursue?

Most of the world owes their freedom, laws, morality, prosperity and blessings to the preaching of the Word. The Reformation in Europe was influenced by strong preaching of men like John Wesley, George Whitfield, and Jonathan Edwards. Looking at those nations today, you would probably ask, “What happened? How did they lose that place in God? How did they lose their zeal, sense of holiness and their influence on society? Was the problem their freedom or prosperity? No! Rather it is the subtle dangers in both freedom and prosperity.

Satan works and attacks very subtly. He knows our cravings and appetites. We can become careless and apathetic. We can seek the gift more than the Giver. We are more concerned with our own comfort and well-being than the desires and requirements of Jesus. It is a daily challenge to follow in His steps.

History shows us that with freedom and prosperity come the temptation to trust in our blessings rather than the One who blesses us. When we are comfortable, have plenty and become self-sufficient, we tend to think we need nothing.

The problem is that we are putting our faith in the wrong thing, in our material world, in treasures on earth. Instead, the Scriptures tell us to lay up treasures in heaven. (See 1 Tim 6:17-19) Scripture warns us of this over and over again.

Take a few moments today to examine what you are really pursuing and seeking: The Giver or the gift? The overcomer is one who seeks the Giver passionately and uses the gift generously. Transformation will follow.

### Today's Prayers:

- Pray that as a Church, we will pursue God, His Kingdom and His Righteousness more than anything that we desire of this world, and that we will put our trust in the Giver of all gifts rather than the gifts themselves.
- Pray for the Human Rights Commission (Suhakam), that through its efforts and works produced, Malaysians, overall, will be aware of their basic human rights, the fundamental liberties as enshrined in Part II of the Federal Constitution. Pray also that SUHAKAM will serve to be an organization that helps the Malaysian government to be more effective in addressing and measuring human rights both locally and internationally.



## His Invitation to All

When we read Revelation 3:21-22, where Jesus is saying “To the one who is victorious, I will give...”, we can safely conclude that He is sounding the heavenly trumpet to everyone to live a life that is set apart for His purposes, to be His voice, salt and light, a counter culture people, and ones who will proclaim His truth.

The Laodicean Church had lost its impact on the world because it had become occupied with the world. It left the Lord standing outside though He was asking to come in, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock.”

Whether you believe that these seven letters portray the seven historical stages the Church would go through, this church does illustrate the conditions of the Church in a large portion of the world today.

What defines us from the world we live in? It is our relationship with Jesus. It is our lives that live out His purpose daily, bringing the influence of His Word, His love and salvation to a decaying culture and world. It is being a counter culture to turn the tide of the Devil and seeing the Spirit of Revival ignited throughout our world.

He wants us to see Him, to clothe ourselves in His righteousness, and to be rich in Him, refined by His holy fire. He desires for us to have ears that hear what His Spirit is saying to us; and to live as Overcomers in Christ.

The church in Laodicea had grown lukewarm and distracted from its once-burning passion and vision. Jesus invited them to renew their focus and passion... and He invites YOU today too!

### Today's Prayers:

- Pray that we will allow Jesus to be the Head, the King, and the Lord of the Church when we worship as the Body of Christ. Repent if we have not been making Him the Master but instead treating Him as a waiting servant to satisfy our worldly desires. Declare His Kingship over our lives and our churches that His glory may fill the earth as the waters cover the sea!
- Pray for the National Audit Department that it will carry out independent and professional audits in order to submit audited accounts and reports that are of international standing to Parliament in a timely and fair manner.

# Acknowledgement

Hearing the Holy Spirit for the Times We Live In	Rev Dr Eu Hong Seng
Year of A New Decade	Pr Sam Ang
Are We Hearing the Spirit of God	Rev Looi Kok Kim
God's Chosen Fast	Rev Andy Chi
Day 1-3: Preparing Our Heart, Mind and Spirit to Hear	Dr Khoo Kay Hup
Day 4-8: Renewing Our First Love	Rev Elisha Satvinder
Day 9-13: The Faithful Restored	Rev Lee Yew Meng
Day 14-18: The Sharp Two-Edged Sword	Elder Lee Choong San
Day 19-23: The Power of Holiness and the Prophetic	Rev Looi Kok Kim
Day 24-29: Awakened to be Alive	Pr Sam Ang
Day 30-32: An Open Door No One Can Shut	Rev Looi Kok Kim
Day 33-34: An Open Door No One Can Shut	Pr Lee Yew Meng
Day 35-40 Refiner's Fire. Prepare to Overcome	Rev Elisha Satvinder
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(All Bible verses are excerpts from English Standard Version except otherwise stated)









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