

"Teaching the things concerning the kingdom of God..."

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 33

THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS

(continued)

“Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast *left thy first love*” (Rev. 2:4).

I am moved to begin this writing by sharing from the pen of a precious brother in the Lord, Hollis Vaughn, of Marshall, Texas. He writes in his little booklet *THE WINEPRESS* the following fascinating story:

I shook the cobwebs from my head as I went to answer the knock which had awakened me. I don't think too clearly at two o'clock in the morning; so it was little wonder that he looked different standing there in the dark. He was obviously upset and concerned about something, so he didn't say much as he slumped into a chair next to the couch. I guess I must have appeared somewhat dazed from being jarred awake from such a sound sleep. So we sat in silence for awhile as each of us wandered through our maze of thoughts.

John had been my pastor all my Christian life. He had always been there when I needed a strong arm to lean on or a word of counsel. But he was more than my pastor, he was a dear friend. He had sat hours on end as I had poured out to him the intimate details of my mixed-up life. Never once had he condemned me. Never once had he expressed shock or disappointment. True, he had corrected me. He had many times, like a skilled detective who pieces together the evidence, pointed out the areas in my life where the enemy was able to enter and harass me. He had even rebuked me on occasion, but never had he condemned or belittled me. He was a rare individual who would never betray a confidence. But now, here he was, looking as if he needed to have someone who would listen to the deep hurts and complaints of his heart.

John breathed out a long sigh and began to speak as if he were just thinking out loud. “She doesn't really know me or understand my needs after all these years.” I was now wide awake! I don't know what I had assumed John's problem was, but I most assuredly didn't think Mary could be the cause. I didn't understand her at times and often she seemed to be caught up in her own little world; nevertheless she was an exceptional woman. She was outstandingly beautiful for her age and seemed to be the ideally devoted wife. I almost felt like saying, “Cheer up, John! Things will look better in the daylight.” But I restrained myself for this was not the first time he had come knocking at an odd hour of the night. I felt honored that one of such stature would come to me, but deep inside there was the unanswered question, “Why does he wait until the middle of the night to

want to talk? Why doesn't he come over for lunch or discuss these things over coffee or when we go fishing? Why these bizarre hours?"

There had been so many mornings when I had stumbled about with bloodshot eyes and incoherent thoughts; and my wife would remark, "You had company last night. Pastor John again?" She was used to these visits and never resented his coming, although I'm sure she also wondered why he didn't come around more during the daylight hours. He was so busy with the huge church that he pastored that I fully expected him to share some problem he was having with the deacon board or the music department. But Mary! I never expected that, and I suppose he sensed my shock as we sat there in semi-darkness.

"Mary just doesn't seem to understand my needs," he continued. She's so energetic and compulsive. She will dive into housework or cooking with such excitement. It is amazing how much she can get accomplished. But then at night — when I want quality time with her — she's so exhausted she can't respond. I know the children are a drain on her and so many people come to her for counsel and advice — she has little time left for me. I'm hurt, and I'm lonely and just a little angry!" I sat bewildered as I listened. As yet, John had not asked a question, for which I was grateful. I certainly had no answers. I was numb with shock. I could not imagine that this giant among men had problems of such magnitude that he would be so visibly moved. Finally admitting that he may have some marital complications, I could not possibly imagine how I could offer any solution. After all, John was my confidant. He had given a sympathetic ear to my perplexities and had given me godly counsel all these years. Perhaps, he just wanted to talk. The least I could do was listen.

"Do you know, when we first fell in love, she used to sing to me. She had an old beat-up guitar which she strummed as she sang love songs to me. It was always out of tune and she didn't play well, but I loved those times." His voice seemed to trail off into some distant memory as he continued, "Since then she's taken voice lessons and uses taped background music. The church loves it — but I miss her off-key singing and that old guitar." I watched John as he seemed to slip back into one of the rooms of his memory — trying to recapture some priceless moment long past. My heart was now aching for him as I, for the first time, saw a side of him I had never seen before. He was deeply in love with Mary, and she was hurting him. He felt rejected. I knew instinctively that he had not come for any answer nor some word of counsel that I might have. He just wanted to talk — to bare his heart.

John glanced up suddenly and caught me off guard with the fierceness of his look. "I've always wanted a large family," he blurted. I couldn't believe my ears. Their family was so large now that it was a joke to all the neighborhood. I'd never seen so many completely different children in one family. There were one or two who definitely took after John. They had his temperament and depth. The rest were like a patchwork quilt of Mary's little quirks and compulsions. I couldn't believe John was being critical or was hurt because of the size of his family. With what I'm sure amplified the incredulous feeling I was experiencing, I sputtered, "But John, you have a house full of children. They're running over each other now. Mary's not a baby factory. She's run ragged taking care of the children you now have."

I felt a little twinge of irritation at John for his unreasonable desires. His eyes locked onto mine, and his next remark left me reeling in shock and disbelief. “Most of our children do not belong to me. I did not father them. I love them and care for them as if they were my own, but I did not father them.” I sat in stunned silence. I had known John and Mary for most of my life. Even before I had become a Christian they had been a “thing” in the neighborhood. Everyone knew they would marry eventually. I knew something that many did not know. Mary had been married before to a very cruel and abusive husband. He had left her bruised and bleeding on more than one occasion. I also knew that she had brought no children into that marriage. I could not believe that Mary was adulterous. I had seen her flirt with many men, but rather than be critical, I passed it off as just being her friendly, outgoing personality. There were times when she had been extremely friendly with me — perhaps too much — but then, we’d known each other for a very long time.

“John, do you mean to tell me that Mary has been unfaithful? Are you saying other men fathered most of your children?” By this time tears were streaming down His face; and I could see the deep hurt in his eyes. He nodded imperceptively and softly continued, “It’s no secret that Mary has been married before. Her first marriage left her spiritually and emotionally scarred. There is within her an area that pulls her back into that same type of situation again and again. It’s as if she’s trying to punish herself by some destructive action. She has come to me time and again in deep remorse and tears, begging me not to throw her out and not to stop loving her. Of course, I can’t do either for my life is wholly wrapped up in her.”

I walked over and put my arms around him and felt his whole body convulse with sobs. We held each other for just a moment and I was thankful that no prying eyes were viewing this scene lest it should be misunderstood. Then I asked very softly, “John, does anyone else know about this? Have you discussed this with others?” He nodded, “Yes, there are a few who know, but not many.” “Has anyone talked with her, counseled her, admonished her,” I asked. I was hoping this wouldn’t get out of hand. What a foolish thought, for it had been out of hand for years! Again he confirmed, “There have been many who have talked with her and warned her of the consequences of her actions. But it’s worse now than it has been in a long time.”

“Would you like for me to speak to her?” I asked. I didn’t quite know what I’d say, and besides I was somewhat nettled that John had shared all these things with others before he had come to me. But that would soon be clarified. “Yes,” he answered. “Go tell my wife that I want her, not her services. Tell her that I am saddened by her frenzied activity. Try to convey to her how much I miss her love songs and that I don’t get joy out of her singing to others. Most of all, beg her to stop seeing her lovers and flirting with strangers. Tell her for me. Maybe she will listen to you.” He sighed heavily as he rose to leave; and even as he was walking out the door, I heard myself saying as I had so many times in the past, “Please don’t stop loving me. I’m sorry I have run after other lovers and have not been faithful to you! Please help me get my priorities in order!”

Does that sound like something strange to say to your pastor? Well, you see, *my pastor was actually Jesus; and Mary is this flirtatious church* with whom He is vitally concerned. This is something the Lord actually disclosed to me in the night hours as He revealed to me His wounded heart. In the book of Revelation, Jesus speaks to the seven churches commending them for their

strength and faithfulness, but lovingly pointing out their failures. The first letter is to the church at Ephesus; and His reproof to her was, “But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.” I feel sure, since this is the first in order, that it likely heads the list in importance.

The first complaint He shared with me was, “She doesn’t understand me. She’s so busy she doesn’t have the energy nor time to spend in intimacy with me.” Most Christians mistakenly believe that time spent in “God’s house” is all that is necessary for their spiritual growth and productivity. May I suggest that most time spent in the average church service is not only poor quality but in many cases actually wasted. Most church meetings bless *us*, but not the Lord! In the majority of cases, it has been our intellect — our soulish man — which has been fed rather than our spirit!

Martha (in the scriptures) was so busy. I’m sure she was cooking and washing pot and pans — all the necessities which accompany having a guest in the home. She wanted to be a proper hostess. She received a startling shock when Jesus told her in so many words, “Martha! With all your service, your cumbersome toil and worry, you’re still missing the precious treasure that Mary has discovered by sitting at my feet. You think it is wasted time, but it is the most precious time you could spend.” Our heavenly husband is after quality time spent in His presence. There is no substitute of equal value.

His next concern was how His wife sang for others and to others, not to Him. This is one of the most deadly traps into which singers fall! To my knowledge there is not one reference in scripture where singers sang solos for the congregation. After their great deliverance from Pharaoh and the host of the Egyptians, Moses and the sons of Israel sang a song *unto the Lord*. It fills almost all of the fifteenth chapter of Exodus. The entire fifth chapter of the book of Judges is an account of the song which Deborah and Barak sang *unto the Lord* because of His great defeat of Sisera, commander of the armies of Canaan. The closest thing I can recall where a man ministered in song and music to another person or persons is where David played before Saul; and the evil spirits departed and Saul’s spirit was quieted. Notice, David did not play *to* Saul nor *for* Saul, but before him. He simply worshipped the Lord in Saul’s presence and that anointed playing was more than the demons could take. I think there is a place where a person can play and sing unto the Lord in the presence of the congregation, and the Lord is pleased and the people are blessed. But that is extremely rare! Usually, “special singing” is ministry to the *house* rather than to the *Lord*. Most singers spend the bulk of their time in preparation of arrangements, enunciation, voice inflection, background music, proper microphones and P.A. systems, stage posturing and gestures. For *whom* is all this energy expended?

I’m sure the Lord is not only grieved but angry with the shepherds, whose primary responsibility is to bring people to the true Shepherd and ever direct their affections toward Him; however, they have set themselves up as the “vicar of Christ” or a Nicolaitane overlord who rules the people by cunning speech, overpowering personality or outright deceit. The bride of Christ is drawn away from her true Husband by craftiness and sleight of hand, lured into a bed of adultery where she is seduced by strangers. This immoral union brings forth children who are assumed to be sons of God; when in fact, they are sons of the devil. God loves them and cares for them, but they do not have the blood of Jesus flowing in their veins! Because of our spiritual anesthetics and easy birthing, we have invited numerous children into the family of God, promising them a life

without suffering and pain. True, our family has increased in numbers and the ranks of our brotherhood have swollen; but our Father is grieved because so many are *illegitimate*. The unfortunate thing is that they truly *believe* they are part of His family!

I could almost wish that when we miss the will of the Father we, and all those about us, could hear His voice of displeasure immediately, loud and clear. In my childish way, I think it would be simpler if, on occasion, the Lord *thundered* His disapproval! Then we wouldn't run after all those strange lovers. Then we wouldn't give birth to illegitimate children. Then we wouldn't "entertain the troops." We would sing only to Him! Then we wouldn't become so exhausted trying to earn merit points and little stars by our names. Then we would have more quality time to spend in His presence. Right? WRONG!!! The truth of the matter is, God does speak to us immediately when we miss His will. It is not a voice which causes the mountains to tremble, nor does it gush forth out of fire and smoke; but it is a still small voice coming forth from the altar of His temple — deep within your bosom — if you are His child. He still thunders His disapproval at our whorish attitudes and behavior, but His voice is muffled and muted by the pandemonium of other voices. Sadly, most Christians do not even *know* the voice of the Beloved! — end quote.

REMEMBER...AND REPENT!

"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent..." (Rev. 1:5).

The call to those in THE EPHESIAN CONDITION is to repent of having left or deserted their first love, their foremost love, or the *love of the highest*. The Greek word for repentance is *metanoia* meaning A CHANGE OF MIND. Yet that itself can miss the mark. A better rendering would be TO TAKE ANOTHER MIND. A man may change in the conceptions of his mind, thus bringing himself to another viewpoint, but with the possibility of being just as mistaken in his new opinion as he was in his former. But to TAKE ANOTHER MIND brings into being A NEW CREATURE, one who cannot revert back to the old viewpoint or adopt another faulty reasoning out of the limited powers of the old mind. So let us see that repentance has to do with the taking of another mind, a mind beyond us, not simply a new decision of our old carnal mind. It means **putting on the mind of Christ!** There is to be no mixing of the old leaven with the new bread. This is extremely important for each of God's elect in this hour as we follow on to make it fully into the camp of the overcomer who inherits the promises!

Every son of God must repent! I have heard it said that sons do not need to repent, only those in the old-order church systems must repent. But "he that overcometh" certainly will repent or he will never *be* an overcomer! By repentance the Lord is leading us to change our spiritual directions, and causing us to walk in the new paths of His will for those called to be conformed to the image of Christ, to reign with Him in His kingdom. Every son is even now repenting and preparing himself for the changes that must take place as we put on the fullness of Christ. We repent every time that the Father brings changes in our lives, as we qualify to be His instrument to bring the new order of the kingdom of God to the nations of earth. We repent of clinging to

anything other than HIS HIGHEST for us, for His highest is that “first” or “paramount” love — the LOVE OF THE HIGHEST.

Because we have repented we are no longer concerned about being nominal Christians, or possessing gifts, or becoming apostles, prophets, or bishops, or getting to heaven when we die. Because we have repented, we have taken *another mind*, and we now desire only GOD’S HIGHEST AND BEST! Because we have repented we are putting on the mind of Christ and seek only those things which are above at the right hand of God, where Christ sits (Col. 3:1). We are being changed into the image and likeness of Christ, and we shall be priests of God after the order of Melchizedek, for that is what Christ is doing at the right hand of God in the heavens of God’s Spirit! We shall be kings with Him, for He is a king and a priest after the order of Melchizedek. As a king and priest of God in the glory of His kingdom we shall minister that same Life, which we received from Him, to the masses of humanity, delivering them from the curse of sin and death. This ministry is reserved for the *overcomer*. And the overcomer is the one who truly *repents* of every lower realm and seeks the FOREMOST LOVE or the LOVE OF THE HIGHEST!

Then the Lord says, “repent, and do the *first works*” (Rev. 2:5). The first works are like the first love — not the childish, immature, zealous works we did when we were first converted, but the *principle* works, the works of the *highest order*! These works are the works of faith and love as we submit to Father’s dealings in our lives to bring us into the fullness of His purpose. Love! That is certainly one of the “first works” as Paul said, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing. And now abideth faith, hope, and love, these three; but *the greatest of these is love*” (I Cor. 13:1-3,13).

I WILL REMOVE YOUR CANDLESTICK

“Repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will *remove thy candlestick out of his place*, except thou repent” (Rev. 2:5).

This is divine discipline! When the Lord says, “I will come quickly,” He means in *judgment*. “I will come in discipline, I will come in correction, I will remove your candlestick, I will take it out of its place.” The candlestick is the church! Some churches have seasons, they are there for a while and they are gone. Some are shut down by divine judgment! True, they have great pomp and programs and activities, but they no longer have a deep and genuine walk in the Holy Spirit. Why are we called to the gospel of Christ? So we can become religious technicians promoting grandiose programs? Oh, no! We are placed in the world to *shine*, to *illuminate* with the light of Christ. That is the purpose of a candlestick! “Ye are the light of the world.”

What is the use of a candlestick if it has no spiritual light of Christ! The Lord tells these people that if they do not repent He will come to them in judgment, swift and effective judgment, and remove them from being the light-bearing children of God. It was a coming that might not take place! The Lord said, “I will come **if** you don’t repent.” Sadly, the actual Ephesian church in Asia never repented. So God allowed the light to go out. Later on the darkness of Islam swept over the land where this church had been located. There is no lampstand in Ephesus today, for there is nothing but the ruins of a once great city. In Ephesus there is no church at all! The church from the corridors of which thousands proclaimed the greatness and the glory of the Christ of God, has now passed away.

I visited Ephesus a number of years ago, and there is nothing there but scattered shells and columns of once majestic and beautiful buildings. We saw buildings that obviously the apostles Paul and John had stood in, but there was nothing there but heaps of stones and collapsing walls. And in the villages and cities of that area there are no church buildings to be seen, only mosques. The epistle to the Ephesians is read the world over, but there is no believer in Ephesus to read it. They did not repent, they did not stay focused on the “first love” and the “first works” which God was really after in their lives, so they were removed. Ephesus, of course, in keeping with the pattern of the book of Revelation, was merely a **typical church**, and the Lord’s solemn warning signal flashes out to this day to be heeded by every man and movement that is of the Ephesian spirit and character. And that is about all of them!

The removal of the candlestick means the snuffing out of the *light*. It means the *lifting of the anointing*. It means the *fleeing of the presence of God*. It means the cloud will move on, while the people remain in the wilderness. It means the people will still be carrying on, singing their songs, clapping their hands, preaching their sermons, promoting their programs, doing their works, *going through the motions like a robot* — but there is no *Life*! The glory has departed from the church systems of men, the old order is dead, the spiritual light of Christ has gone out, the once glorious works of the Spirit have been removed, and God has moved on. I wonder how many candlesticks have been removed from our communities, towns, and cities, and the people do not even realize it! Because the people are still gathering together week after week, polishing their candlestick in the darkness of their carnality, they realize not that the light is missing! We see a lot of excitement, a lot of emotion, a lot of zeal, a lot of promotion and activity, and hear a lot of beautiful music emanating from church groups all across the land, yet methinks that many of them do not realize that the Lord has *removed their candlestick* — they are no longer the true spiritual Light of Christ in the world! Having a form of godliness, they deny within themselves the power thereof. The church cries out to the world to repent, and believe the gospel. But the living Christ is crying out to the *church to repent*!

A story might be appropriate here. Before the time of electric railroad-crossing gates an old fellow was in charge of one particular crossing. Sitting in his little cabin at night, dozing in and out of consciousness, he would sometimes hear the rattle of the tracks in the distance. He would then quickly grab his lantern from the wall and run out into the night to warn any cars that a train was coming. But one time he had waited a little too long. Headlights were already coming up the road and the train was fast approaching. Hurriedly he ran down the highway, swinging the lantern in a wide arc back and forth, screaming, “Stop! Stop!” At the last minute, he jumped out of the way of the car as it raced past him and smashed into the freight. When the authorities put the old fellow

on trial for negligence, his astute railroad lawyers proved beyond doubt that the young people in the car had been drinking and that the old gentleman was respected in the community and considered trustworthy. He would probably have gotten off, but the prosecuting lawyer happened to ask the old man in an unguarded moment, “In your hurry, old timer, did you think to *light the lantern?*” Ah — swinging the lantern is not enough — there must be a *light*! Ringing bells, singing hymns, clapping hands, preaching sermons, performing ordinances, having outreaches, is not enough — there must be *spiritual light* in the lampstand!

Only by yielding ourselves continually to the voice, leadings, and dealings of the Spirit can we truly *be* His light in brighter and brighter measures. The surest way not to have further light is to not walk experientially in the light that has been given us. If all we know is the *teaching* or *doctrine* of reconciliation, sonship and the kingdom, and do not experience the out-working of the *spirit* of reconciliation, sonship and the kingdom then we, too, have *knowledge* rather than *reality*, and *doctrine* instead of *life*. We have received from God His revelation! Are there areas where He has revealed His truth to us, yet we have ignored it or not yielded to its in-working? In that case, the Lord calls us to repent. Should we fail to repent He will pull down the shade of heaven upon us and no more light will be forthcoming until we *experience* what we have received! He will remove our candlestick. It’s just as simple as that!

THE DOCTRINE OF THE NICOLAITANES

“But this thou hast, that thou hatest the *deeds of the Nicolaitanes*, which I also hate” (Rev. 2:6). “So hast thou also them that hold the *doctrine of the Nicolaitanes*, which thing I hate” (Rev. 2:15).

When the Lord was showing John on Patmos what the seven churches would be like, He commended the church at Ephesus because they hated the **deeds of the Nicolaitanes**, which the Lord also detested. In Pergamos, the third church, these *deeds* had become *accepted doctrine*, which the Lord also hated. For whatever reason the Lord chose not to let history record the precise teachings of the Nicolaitanes. He does, however, want us to understand just what this bunch of hooligans is about and therefore He has given us one infallible piece of evidence.

There are three named heresies among the seven churches — the Nicolaitanes, Balaam, and the woman Jezebel. None of these are identified under these names in church history, despite the frantic efforts of historians to tell us that Nicholas and Jezebel were real persons — even going so far as to blacken the good name of Nicholas of Antioch (one of the seven deacons of Acts 6:5), as the guilty party. It is said by some that Nicholas founded a movement of apostates who had pagan feasts and were most immoral in their behavior. They taught that in order to master sensuality one would have to know by experience the whole range of it first. Naturally this spawned the most bizarre and wanton orgies and other fleshly endeavors as a necessary step on the road to perfection. Thus the historians applied to them the two Old Testament names that symbolized such extravagances: Balaam and Jezebel. Since Balaam corrupted the people of Israel and thus conquered them, it was said that Nicholas did likewise. This group was supposedly forced out of Ephesus and found a place of establishment in Pergamos. But the problem about this belief is

that *it is not true*. There is absolutely no history for it. It is at best tradition, but I view it as mere myth and folklore — a fairy tale!

The names are symbolic of the heresies they represent. When a name appears in the scriptures its meaning sheds light upon the spiritual reality behind the name. What was this thing God hated but man loved and would **not** stop doing? What are these Nicolaitanes? We'll understand it when we know what the name means! The word comes from two Greek words: *nikao*, which means "to rule over or to conquer," and *laos*, which means "the laity or the people." Put these definitions together and you get a domineering ruling class within the body of Christ whose main agenda is to get the upper hand, conquer, subordinate, and subdue those who they consider "less gifted," "less knowledgeable," and "less qualified" than themselves!

In the religious world there are those who are called "clergy" and those who are called "laity." Where do you suppose these titles came from? "Laity, lay person, and layman" are all derivatives from the Greek word *laos* mentioned above! This is a title that has come to us from religious Babylon! The clergy are called the "reverends," "doctors," "pastors," "teachers," "evangelists," "overseers," "bishops," "ministers," "priests," "superintendents," "leaders," etc. These are often termed "men of the cloth" — men who wear special attire as a matter of identification as "clergy." These are the people who have the power, authority, and lordship! The rest of us poor folks are just "laity."

What were the "deeds" of the Nicolaitanes? They were exalting the "clergy" over the "laity"! The clergy class were dominating the laity, the people. The clergy were exalted whereas the laity were abased. The clergy became the authority, they became the fountain of all truth, they had the last word, and the laity were the "dumb sheep" that were instructed to follow and do what they were told. I once read that the saddest thing that happened to the church was when it stopped being a *family* and became an *audience*. Most people have missed the point completely; they conceive of the church as a drama wherein they are merely spectators. In this drama the minister is the principle actor, God is his prompter whispering His lines in his ear — should he chance to forget them — and the congregation are the critics who pass their judgment upon the performance when all has been said and done. This can be perceived by the comments of many people to the minister (actor) who has now made his way to the front door to receive the acclamation of the spectators. "Good job, preacher! You really did a good job today. You really let 'em have it!" Or the comment, "The choir was really beautiful today." The whole idea expressed seems to be that it was a drama; it was a performance, a *show*, and you express your acceptance and your approval. You are the critic and it is up to you to pass your judgment.

We have here a "caste system" of "clergy" and "laity" which has been clearly and soundly repudiated by the firstborn Son of God! The firstborn Son, the pattern Son, the proto-type of what the life of sonship is all about, said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men hold them in subjection; but it *must not be so among you*. On the contrary, whoever desires to be first among you must be your slave; and whosoever may desire to *take rank* among you, let him be your servant: just as the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve. You are not to be called *teacher*, for One is your Teacher, and you are all *brothers*. And do not call anyone on earth *father*, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. And you must not be called *leaders*, for you have one Leader, the Christ. He who is greatest among you must be your

servant. Whoever *exalts himself* shall be humbled; and whosoever *humbles himself* shall be raised to honor” (Mat. 20:25-27; 23:8-12, Amplified & Ferrar Fenton). Men **love to rule**, even though God has called all of us to **serve** one another. How many churches or groups can we point out today who observe these words of the Lord Jesus? **THINK ABOUT IT!**

God’s people, since the days of king Saul, have been accustomed to appointing kings, priests, prophets, bishops, pastors, teachers, elders, deacons, overseers, leaders, and rulers of all kinds, to hear the word of the Lord for them, and rule over them by it, instead of **hearing and knowing the Lord for themselves**. But that old order has since passed away! It has not passed away for those who remain in religious Babylon, but God has established a new and spiritual order for His elect who are *in Christ*. This new order is not really *new*, for it is the *very same order* the Lord Jesus *gave to His disciples*! It is the order of **sonship**! And this new order of the spirit of sonship replaces all those substitutes, whether they be bishops, pastors, priests, elders, or anything else. Oh, yes, there are spiritual ministries in the body of Christ! But these spiritual ministries are *servants*, not leaders or rulers. In this new kingdom day God is making His elect to be sons of the Father with the spiritual ability to HEAR all the Lord would tell us and to KNOW Him by personal experience of His fullness. No longer do His called and chosen ones submit to the lordship of others who can hear and act “for” them, but as *brethren* in the body of Christ they share the same mind, nature, life, and power and so admonish, encourage, confirm, and bless one another as each joint supplies. **ONLY THE HEAD RULES!** There is one Head and one Leader, even Christ, who dwells within. These are such simple principles, and so divine, that one would think all men could understand, but the carnal mind *never* understands!

The word of the Lord is coming forth today! This fresh, new word is not given only to designated apostles, prophets, pastors, or teachers. It is better, rather, to avoid those who claim such titles and offices and turn your spiritual ears to the heavens of God’s Spirit, and hear for yourself what your Father has to say. The word that you receive will then be confirmed by all who are walking in the Spirit and hearing from the Father. How beautiful this is! What safety there is in this order of the Spirit! Father’s anointed word of life, wisdom, power, and authority is radiating out of the Spirit of the Son within us. Let us HEAR HIM and then obediently DO all He tells us to do! Christ alone is the true Head, Lord, and King of all His elect and chosen ones. His faithful and obedient elect are hearing His pure word from His pure mind. And they are fulfilling His word, walking out His righteousness and will out of His holy nature and power. They are worshipping Him in spirit and in truth, as our Lord told us to do, and not after the traditions of the church systems. By these necessary principles of consecration and yieldedness unto the Lord, those called to sonship are becoming a holy, separated people unto the Lord, prepared to serve His holy kingdom purposes in all the earth.

I do not seek to revile, but rather to speak the truth in love as I warn all who seek after life, immortality, and sonship to God to flee from the deeds and doctrines of the Nicolaitanes as you would flee from a poisonous snake or a lion in the jungle. Let us reverently consider together just how this heresy entered in among the Lord’s people. What a flood of light fell upon the world in the ministry of Jesus and His apostles! Then following His ascension, by the gift of the Holy Ghost which is the spirit of Christ, the Lord came again in mighty Spirit power to indwell His people. The church was birthed, and gathered from Jew and Gentile alike, a vast multitude into its bosom. The shadows of the law were replaced by the glorious and eternal reality of a living,

indwelling Christ. In those few holy years Christ Himself within was the only Head of the church and unity and harmony flowed like a river and the body of Christ was one. There was no government but the government of the Spirit. Love and wisdom shone like the sun from the mind of God. When the human body knows no government but the government of its head, all is order and unity, and there is health and power. So also it was with the body of Christ!

And what glorious days those were! One only has to read the book of Acts to see how much God blessed His people in those days. Mighty signs and wonders were performed as God confirmed His word with signs following. The word of God, anointed by the Holy Spirit, swept the world like a prairie fire. It encircled the mountains and crossed the oceans. It made kings to tremble and tyrants to fear. It was said of those early Christians that they turned the world upside down! So powerful was their message and spirit. In spite of persecution it grew and multiplied, for God dwelt mightily in the midst of His people. The knowledge of the glory of the Lord covered the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Even before the apostles had departed their earthly life, a spirit and system had set in among the saints of the Lord and many people were wearing the Babylonish garment. They were instituting rules and regulations, laying down laws, formulating creeds, observing days, establishing sacraments and ordinances, elevating human government, becoming disciples of Paul, of Apollos, of Cephas, and of many others. The babble had begun and the mysterious *man of sin* was raising his ugly head. Before too many years had passed men began to set themselves up as “bishops” and “lords” over God’s heritage in place of the Holy Spirit.

There was a whole group of leaders that rose up in the churches just about the time the first apostles were passing from the scene — the very time John received his revelation on Patmos! Church historians refer to them as **The Apostolic Fathers**. One of these was a man by the name of Ignatius. Ignatius was the second bishop of Antioch, that city in Syria from which Barnabas and Paul set out on their famous missionary journey (Acts 13-14). The ancient church historian Eusebius says Ignatius was appointed as the second bishop there about A.D. 69. A number of Ignatius’ letters, written to various churches such as Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Philadelphia, and Smyrna still exist. I have read these letters, as well as those of others of the so-called Apostolic Fathers, and it is quite astonishing to see with what prominence and emphasis THE DOCTRINE OF THE NICOLAITANES comes across in each!

Again and again Ignatius exhorts the saints, “Since, then, I received your whole congregation in God’s name in the person of Onesimus, a man of inexpressible love and **your bishop**, I beseech you by Jesus Christ to love him and, all of you, to be like him. For blessed is he who gives you the gift, worthy as you are, of **obtaining such a bishop**. Therefore it is fitting for you to run your race together with **the bishop’s purpose** — as you do. For your presbytery is **attuned to the bishop like strings to a lyre**. For if in a short time I had such fellowship with **your bishop** as was not human but spiritual, how much more blessed do I consider you who are **mingled with him** as the church is with Jesus Christ and as Jesus Christ is with the Father, so that all things are harmonious in unison! If the prayer of one or two has such power, how much more does that of **the bishop** and the whole church? Let us therefore be eager **not to oppose the bishop, so that we may be subject to God**. And the more anyone sees **the bishop** being silent, the more one should **fear him**. For everyone whom the master of a house sends for his

stewardship, we must receive as the one who sent him. It is obvious, then, that one must **look upon the bishop as the Lord Himself...obey the bishop and the presbytery** with undisturbed mind.”

Instead of conquering by the power of the Spirit and Truth, as in the early days, men began to substitute *their* ideas and *their* methods. Soon the glory and power, the presence of God in the morning time church began to be eclipsed, and the power of carnal-minded men gradually took the place of the awesome presence of God. Consequently men’s carnal understanding was put upon the scriptures, and as the Spirit of Christ fled from their midst, men established a vast and elaborate system of *substitutes* to take the place of reality. A “falling away” of a massive and dreadful nature arose until the church of Christ became gradually the religion of antichrist!

If the early church had been organized after the manner of the harlot church systems of today, the records would have been quite different from what they are. We would have had some reference to our Lord’s installation of the apostleship with great ceremony, Himself sitting somewhere in state as a Pope, receiving the apostles in scarlet robes. We would have some record of how Paul set in “the pastor” over each church, how Paul later returned to visit the churches and met with “the pastor,” and how the sick should call for “the pastor” of the church, and let him pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. We would have some reference to the need for the church to be recognized and chartered by the State so its ministers could legally marry the young and bury the dead; we would have some specific examples of how Jesus and the apostles conducted funerals, performed weddings, and how the pastors did dedications. There would be some instructions about how to organize the church with a church “board,” how to “call” a preacher, how to hire and fire ministries, how to promote building programs, and the importance of the choir.

I could go on and on and on — believe me, I could! There is no end to all the things we once accepted as normal, necessary, scriptural, and spiritual which have absolutely no foundation in the order of God’s Spirit. Praise God, the consuming fire of HIS dealings and processings in our lives is thoroughly purging and cleansing our hearts of ALL the spirit and ways of man’s religion, leading us to once and for all forsake ALL the traditions and trappings of religious Babylon, that HE may take His royal seat upon the throne of our hearts and lead us in the paths of His kingdom. The ministers of man’s religion carry within them the nature of this world’s bestial system, and they do everything patterned after the ways of the world — to build a name for themselves, to gain and usurp control over other men’s lives, to establish a creed or a movement, to solidify a power base under them, for financial gain. The true ministries in the body of Christ carry in them the nature of Christ, taking the way of the cross, being stripped of all fame and earthly glory, going without the camp to bear reproach and shame because of what GOD has spoken into their heart. They seek no power over other men’s lives, no control, nothing for themselves. They do no works that the flesh can boast in, they assume no title, no identification that the world recognizes. They build no kingdoms about them, establish no hierarchies, but are *living epistles of Christ, examples to the flock, and servants of all*.

Jesus is the Pattern Son! He is the *firstborn* among many brethren. Let us prayerfully and reverently consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our profession! He wanted nothing of the religion of the Pharisees. He held nothing but contempt for the organized religion of that day, for

the blinding traditions of the learned and prestigious Rabbis, the distorted doctrines of the Pharisees who walked about with the most imposing and pretentious titles, clothed in elaborate and gorgeous vestments, loving the chief seats in the synagogue, and binding upon the people heavy burdens, grievous to be borne, with all sorts of rules and regulations, extrapolations of the law. Because He was a *Son*, Jesus' center was in nothing of earth, nothing of the traditions of men. Jesus never concerned Himself with external structures of organization, hierarchy, buildings, programs, creeds, ceremonies, promotions, or any other carnal thing. He ministered LIFE, LIGHT, LOVE, REALITY AND TRUTH. Period. He was unusual. He would not follow the methods and techniques of the world. He would not go with the multitude.

In Jesus' message to the church at Ephesus He says that He **hates** the **deeds** and the **doctrine** of the **NICOLAITANES**. He hated it when He was here on earth, He hated it in the church at Ephesus, and He hates it today. Every son of God hates it! I hate it, and every reader of these lines who has received the call to sonship **hates it!** The rule of man is an abomination to the spirit of sonship!