

THE CHURCH THAT STRAYED FROM GOD'S PATH

The Revelation 2:12-17

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Introduction:

A man bought a new hunting dog. Eager to see how he would perform, he took him out to track a bear. No sooner had they gotten into the woods than the dog picked up the trail. Suddenly he stopped, sniffed the ground, and headed in a new direction. He had caught the scent of a deer that had crossed the bear's path. A few moments later he halted again, this time smelling a rabbit that had crossed the path of the deer. And so, on and on it went until finally the breathless hunter caught up with his dog, only to find him barking triumphantly down the hole of a field mouse.

The early church was kind of like that. It started out great, but soon left its first love (Revelation. 2:1-7), then became unwilling to pay the price (Revelation. 2:8-11), and now, getting sidetracked.

We must not get off course. How?

I. By Building on What God Knows Good About Us (13)

A. Our Allegiance to His Name (13a)

1. Lord, His deity
2. Jesus, His humanity
3. Christ, His exalted position

B. Our Adherence to His Doctrine (13b)

1. The Scriptures
2. The Saviour
3. His Salvation
4. His Scheme
 - a. His Church
 - b. His Children
 - c. His Covenant with Israel
 - d. His Coming Again

C. Our Antipas Example (13c)

1. He was dead while he lived

When **James Calvert** went out as a missionary to the cannibals of the **Fiji Islands**, the captain of the ship sought to turn him back. "**You will lose your life** and the lives of those with you if you go among such savages," he cried. Calvert only replied, "**We died before we came here.**"

2. He is alive while he is dead--note Hebrews. 11:4
"he being dead yet speaketh."

II. By Repenting of What God sees Wrong in Us (14-17)

Gentlemen:

Enclosed you will find a check for \$150. I cheated on my income tax return last year and have not been able to sleep ever since. If I still have trouble sleeping I will send you the rest.

Sincerely, A Tax Payer

A. The Doctrine of Balaam (14)

Things Offensive to God's People, "cast a stumbling block."

1. The One Side of the Issue: Cursing, smoking, drinking, language, attitudes, hangouts, acquaintances, etc.

a. The attitude of Jesus:

"Notwithstanding, lest we should **offend** them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee."
(Matthew 17:27)

b. Warnings of Jesus:

"But whoso shall **offend** one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."
(Matthew 18:6) "Woe unto the world because of **offences!** for it must needs be that **offences** come; but woe to that man by whom the **offence** cometh!" (Matthew 18:7)

"Wherefore, if meat make my brother to **offend**, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to **offend.**" (1 Corinthians 8:13)

"For in many things we **offend** all. If any man **offend** not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." (James 3:2) "Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body." (James 3:3) "Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth." (James 3:4) "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" (James 3:5) "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." (James 3:6) "For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:" (James 3:7) "But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." (James 3:8) "Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God." (James 3:9) "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing

*and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be."
(James 3:10)*

2. The Other Side: Though people may cause us to stumble, and will answer for it, we are still responsible--

*Recently, I saw a **cartoon** that demonstrated how people don't like to take responsibility. It was a Peanuts cartoon, and it showed **Peppermint Patty talking to Charlie Brown**. She said, "Guess what, Chuck. The first day of school, and I got sent to the principal's office. It was **your fault**, Chuck." He said, "My fault? How could it be my fault? Why do you say everything is my fault?" She said, "You're my friend, aren't you, Chuck? You should have been a better influence on me."*

Somehow, we think that someone else is responsible.

Read I Peter 4:1-11, what God expects of us.

B. The Doctrine of the Nicolaitaines (15)

In Ephesus (2:6), a deed; now, a doctrine. As Diotrephes (III John 9-11) wanted the preeminence, and to cast out, so now, in this "married to the world" church, certain were developing a doctrine of clergy superiority over laity, with power to excommunicate.

III. By Receiving the Reward God has for You (17)

*One stormy night many years ago an **elderly couple entered the lobby of a small hotel** and asked for a room. The clerk explained that because there were three conventions in town, the hotel was filled. "But I can't send a nice couple like you out in the rain at 1 o'clock in the morning," he said. "Would you be willing to **sleep in my room?**" The couple hesitated, but the clerk insisted. The next morning when the man paid his bill, he said, "**You're the kind of manager who should be the boss of the best hotel in the United States. Maybe someday I'll build one for you.**" The clerk smiled, amused by the older man's "little joke." A few years passed. Then one day the clerk received a letter from the elderly man, recalling that stormy night, and asking him to come to New York for a visit. A round-trip ticket was enclosed. When the clerk arrived, his host took him to the corner of 5th Avenue and 34th Street, where stood a magnificent new building. "That," explained the man, "is the hotel I have just built for you to manage." "You must be joking," said the clerk. "I most assuredly am not," came the reply. "Who -- who are you?" stammered the other. "**My name is William Waldor Astor.**" **That hotel was the original Waldorf- Astoria, and the young clerk who became its first manager was George C. Boldt.***

Conclusion:

*It is important when facing opposition to have sense that you are making progress. Do you know what **Christopher Columbus wrote in his diary**, on his way to a New World, not yet discovered? Bear in mind, he **faced mutiny, many of his men wanted to turn around, and he was in trouble most of the trip**. And every day on his log the last entry that he would write was: "**Today we moved WESTWARD!**" i.e., "we sailed on."*