

**JESUS' LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES IN REVELATION 2-3**  
**LETTER 6 | THE CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA: THE FAITHFUL CHURCH**  
**REVELATION 3:7-13 | 1 NOVEMBER 2009**  
**2ND STREET COMMUNITY CHURCH**  
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This morning we're heading back to **REVELATION 3**, to the sixth of seven letters Jesus wrote to the churches in Asia Minor in around 95-96 A.D. The Church at Philadelphia is the only letter without a **CRITICISM** or a **CORRECTION**. Remember the structure Jesus uses throughout these seven letters?

**JESUS GIVES THE SEVEN CHURCHES ...**

<b>COMMENDATION OR PRAISE</b>	<b>WHAT THEY'RE DOING RIGHT</b>
<b>CRITICISM OR JUDGMENT</b>	<b>WHAT THEY'RE DOING WRONG</b>
<b>INSTRUCTION OR CORRECTION</b>	<b>HOW THEY CAN MAKE CHANGES</b>
<b>PROMISE OR BLESSING</b>	<b>THE FRUIT OF THESE CHANGES</b>
<b>EXHORTATION</b>	<b>FINAL WORDS OF WISDOM</b>

And so as we look into Jesus' words here, I'm also going to tie them into a couple teachings of Jesus found in **MATTHEW 7 & 16** because I believe that together, these three passages will help us, as 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Believers see what it means to be faithful, followers of Jesus Christ. But I want to begin this morning by telling you a story ...

**ILLUSTRATION ... Once, a man died and went to heaven. After standing in a registration line, receiving his ID Card and housing assignment, and meeting with his advisor, he went on a tour where he saw all the buildings great and small ... streets going off in every direction. It was an *exciting* and *exhausting* day.**

The tour guide commented on nearly everything they passed, but as they kept going by one building –in fact, the biggest building the man had ever seen –the guide said nothing about it. Finally the man asked “We’ve gone by that building several times and you haven’t said anything about it.” The guide replied, “Oh, you don’t want to go in *there*.” The man’s interest was peaked. “Why don’t you want me to know what’s in there? Is that where the Ark is? Come on!”

Finally the guide gave in and as they walked through the front door, the man couldn’t believe his eyes. Rows of shelves as far as he could see ... they just kind of went off the edge of the horizon. And tall? They seemed to go up to the sky! And on each shelf was a box with a lid. “What is this place?” the man asked again with a mixture of fear and curiosity. “Well,” the guide continued, “There’s a box here for every person *who has ever lived*.” “*Ever lived*? Come on!” the man said. “No, seriously!” said the guide. “You mean there’s a box here for me?” “Of course.” “Can I see it?” “Well, nobody’s ever asked before, but yes, I guess you can see it.”

And so the man began his search. For hours they walked down the rows. And finally he found the section with his last name and after another hour or so ... he found it. *His box, with his name.* Slowly he took the box down from its high shelf and after receiving the approving nod of the guide he carefully removed the lid.

And as he gazed into his box and all that it held, he was nearly paralyzed. And after standing there for a long, long time, he finally looked back to the guide and asked, with tears streaming down his cheeks, "What are all these wondrous, unimaginable things?"

To which the guide replied, "These are all the things God the Father wanted to give to you in your life, but you never asked Him for."

There might not be a box in heaven with your name on it like in this story, but even if you're not very well acquainted with God, ***GOD KNOWS YOU***. And God has so much that He wants to share with you ... beginning with Himself. And then the rewards of walking with Him ... and the abundant life of living with Him and for Him.

**REVELATION 3:7 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)**

<sup>7</sup> "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this:

Have you ever thought about what it means to really know Jesus Christ ... **the holy and true One**? A lot of people ***KNOW ABOUT JESUS***, but fewer ***REALLY KNOW HIM***, and even less have made the choice ***TO GIVE UP ALL ELSE TO FOLLOW HIM***.

I've been in love with Jesus Christ for about 31 years now and I don't know how people who don't know Him make it in this life. Seriously. You may think you're doing great without Jesus ... but it won't last. Especially when you get into the middle of the trials, temptations, and problems every one of us have gone through, are going through, or eventually will go through in this life. And this is a truth that the people who made up the Church at Philadelphia had discovered ... and it's something Jesus is going to invite all of us here this morning to discover with them.

<b><u>REVELATION 2:1-6</u></b>	<b>EPHESUS</b>	<b>THE LOVELESS CHURCH</b>
<b><u>REVELATION 2:7-11</u></b>	<b>SMYRNA</b>	<b>THE SUFFERING CHURCH</b>
<b><u>REVELATION 2:12-17</u></b>	<b>PERGAMUM</b>	<b>THE COMPROMISING CHURCH</b>
<b><u>REVELATION 2:18-29</u></b>	<b>THYATIRA</b>	<b>THE CORRUPTED CHURCH</b>
<b><u>REVELATION 3:1-6</u></b>	<b>SARDIS</b>	<b>THE DEAD CHURCH</b>
<b><u>REVELATION 3:7-13</u></b>	<b>PHILADELPHIA</b>	<b>THE FAITHFUL CHURCH</b>

In most Bible commentaries, the Church at Philadelphia is referred to as ***THE FAITHFUL CHURCH***. And as we look into this letter we're going to learn a couple very important **FAITH LESSONS** about ***FAITHFULNESS*** ...

**FAITH LESSON** ...

- **FAITHFULNESS IS ABOUT SENSITIVITY AND OBEDIENCE.** As followers of Jesus Christ, **FAITHFULNESS** happens when we listen to and obey the leadings, the promptings, and the nudges of God's Holy Spirit moment-by-moment and choice-by-choice.
- **FAITHFULNESS IS ABOUT VICTORY AND BEING OVERCOMERS.** As followers of Jesus Christ, **FAITHFULNESS** begins to happen when we make the choice to go through the doors God opens for us ... instead of pushing our way through the doors we're opening for ourselves.

This is going to be a morning of **ENCOURAGEMENT** and **CHALLENGE: ENCOURAGEMENT** to grow in our sensitivity and obedience to the nudges of God's Holy Spirit. And the **CHALLENGE** to remain **FAITHFUL** in the days before the LORD'S return, partnering with Him in what God's up to instead of just kind of hoping God puts His stamp of approval onto what we're doing.

In a group this size, there are probably a number of different end-time doctrines and beliefs represented. But the one thing I bet we can all agree on is that, like the old Andre' Crouch song says, "**soon and very soon, we are going to see the King.**" Gang, Jesus Christ is going to return for His church. This is a fact. We don't know **WHEN**. But the truth is that you and I as followers of Jesus Christ need **TO GET READY, AND STAY READY.**

And if you want to stand up and be counted with Jesus Christ as one of His followers during these days when the lines between righteousness and sin are becoming more and more distinct all the time ... if you want to make a difference in the world for Jesus Christ when so many people are looking for meaning and purpose for their lives ... then the message Jesus writes to the Church at Philadelphia –the **FAITHFUL CHURCH** –is a message that Jesus wants to pour straight into your heart and mind.

**REVELATION 3:7-8 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)**

<sup>7</sup> **"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this:**

<sup>8</sup> **'I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.**

Like the previous five letters Jesus writes in **REVELATION 2-3**, this one is addressed to "**the angel/messenger**" in the Church at Philadelphia. It was Jesus' wish that these letters come first to the pastor of each church, and that they'd then lovingly **pass the messages onto** the individuals in each of their flocks. Oh, how excited the **pastor** of the Church at Philadelphia must have been when this letter showed up! Jesus identifies Himself as the author of this letter, as the **One who is holy and who is true**. Oh, how Jesus longs for us to know Him as the **One who is holy and true** ... and how intimately this truth is related to what I said earlier ... that Jesus knows your name and my name, and that right now, He's opening doors for us to walk through ... and He's closing doors He doesn't want us to walk through. He knows our **deeds**, and

that we may be **nearly powerless**, and that we may be almost out of strength, but He also knows the ways in which we've "**kept His WORD and not denied His name.**"

***ILLUSTRATION*** ... I spent first through fourth grade in the central Washington town of Quincy where our house was surrounded on three sides by sugar beet fields. At the edge of one of these fields was a gravel pile the city used to gravel the roads in the winter. But the rest of the year it unofficially belonged to me, my older brother Keith, our friends, and our dog, a German Shorthair named Hans.

On weekdays we'd go out to the gravel pile right after getting off the school bus ... trying to escape our mom's demands that we practice the piano, pull weeds, clean our rooms, or do homework. And on weekends we'd head to the gravel pile right after breakfast.

You have to realize ... this was a very small town ... and the gravel pile was about as exciting as it got! Which meant we had to use our imaginations. In the summer we'd climb up it and play *King of the Hill*. And in the winter we'd ride down its snow-covered sides on sleds and inner tubes. It was our own private realm of discovery and adventure. But, like all fantasies, ours always, eventually came to an end ... usually when we heard our moms or dads calling out our names. "Gregg! Gregg! Gregg!"

Jesus is calling out each of our names this morning. And because He loves us, we can trust the **instruction, correction, encouragement, and training in righteousness** He longs to bring us through His WORD (cf., **SECOND TIMOTHY 3:16-17**).

Again, the **One who is holy and true** knows our names. And when He calls our names, He invites us to answer Him, come down off the gravel pile of our own pursuits, our own intellect, and our own desires, so that we can begin to know and pursue Him in the same consistent and intimate ways He knows and pursues us.

Jesus says in **vv. 7-8** that one of the things He does for us is **open and shut doors**. This means that in God's love for us, He knows what's ahead of us, and is preparing the way for us, and us for the way. You know, it's one thing to believe that God knows what's ahead of us ... but it's another thing to believe that every day, as we stand with Him, keep His WORD, and hold onto His name, and onto the truth that He's equipping us for what's up ahead, around the corner, and around the bend.

Some of you are looking ahead to some pretty hard things. You've been out of a job for too long, and you don't have many prospects. Some of you are at the edge of new chapters of your life ... maybe you'll graduate from HS or college this year, and you don't yet know what your "next steps" will be. But you know what? God knows you, and no matter what it looks like, **God is opening doors, and God is shutting doors.**

And as we get into God' WORD, and invite it to get into us ... as we store it away into our hearts, and apply it in the day-to-day situations of our lives ... and as we stay true to His name and don't live the kind of **SPLIT-PERSONALITY, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LIVES** that leads to divided hearts and minds, we'll begin to see the fruit of discernment in our lives ... we'll begin to see which doors God is opening and which

doors God is closing ... **AND WE'LL BEGIN TO SEE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THOSE DOORS AND THE ONES WE'RE TRYING TO OPEN UP OR CLOSE ON OUR OWN.**

Gang, let's agree right here, right now, that we're not going to open up our own doors, and we're not going to shut our own doors. Let's commit that in our jobs, in our relationships, and in our homes, that we're going to only walk through the doors that God is opening, and that we're going to walk right past the doors God is shutting. Can you commit to this way of living with me? Because remember, the **One who is holy and true**, knows what He's doing. And because of that, you and I have to make the choice to **STAY AWAKE TO**, and remain **FAITHFUL TO** His voice and to His call.

There's a great story of a little boy named Samuel in **FIRST & SECOND SAMUEL**. And something happened at the beginning of his life that connects with what Jesus is saying in this letter to the Church at Philadelphia.

**Elkanah and Hannah hadn't been able to have a child. Finally, Hannah told God that if He'd give her a child, she'd give the child back to Him. And for reasons known only to Him, God opened a door, and Hannah conceived. When their son was born, they named him Samuel, and after he was weaned, Hannah kept her word, and gave little Samuel over to a priest named Eli to raise in the Temple.**

**Now there's some irony in this story because Eli had really blown it with his own sons. So giving Samuel to Eli probably seemed like an *illogical door* for God to open. I mean, why in the world would God want Samuel to be in the hands of a priest who couldn't raise his own kids? But how many of you know that sometimes God's ways, and God's doors, are a lot different than our ways, and our doors?**

**And in FIRST SAMUEL 3, we read the story of God calling out Samuel's name and telling him about some of the doors He was going to open for him in his future, and some of the doors He was going to close.**

**Samuel, probably a young boy at this time, is asleep and he hears a voice say, "Samuel". And so he runs into Eli's room and said, "What do you want?" And the WORD says that Eli replied, "Samuel, I didn't call out to you, go back to bed." I bet the original Hebrew means something more like "Why'd you wake me up? Get out of here kid!" But this happened three times and in FIRST SAMUEL 3:8 we read ...**

**FIRST SAMUEL 3:8 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)**

**<sup>8</sup> So the Lord called Samuel again for the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli *discerned that the Lord was calling the boy.* [emphasis mine]**

And this time Eli said, **"Samuel, go lie down, and if He calls you that again say, 'Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening.'"** So Samuel went back to bed again ... and sure enough, the LORD called out to him again and Samuel said what Eli told him to say ... **"Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening."**

God knew Samuel's name. Do you see it? And after Samuel figured out what was going on, after he warmed up to God's voice, he said, "**Yes LORD, tell me what you want me to know. I'm listening. I'll do what You want me to do.**" Oh, that you and I would be a generation of Samuels ... men and women, young and old, eager to hear and to obey the voice and the commands of the **One who is holy and true.**

Gang, I hope it blows you away that Jesus Christ knows your name, has plans for you, and is opening and closing doors for you! The Apostle Paul wrote in **EPHESIANS 1:4** that **even before the foundations of the world were laid Jesus knew us.**

And King David wrote in **PSALM 139:13** that **God knows us before we're formed in our mother's wombs.** And knowing us, it's God's desire that we come to know Him, and live lives of **FAITHFULNESS** as His followers. Let's revisit the couple important **FAITH LESSONS** about **FAITHFULNESS** we looked at earlier together this morning ...

### **FAITH LESSON ...**

- **FAITHFULNESS IS ABOUT SENSITIVITY AND OBEDIENCE.** As followers of Jesus Christ, **FAITHFULNESS** happens when we listen to and obey the leadings, the promptings, and the nudges of God's Holy Spirit moment-by-moment and choice-by-choice.
- **FAITHFULNESS IS ABOUT VICTORY AND BEING OVERCOMERS.** As followers of Jesus Christ, **FAITHFULNESS** begins to happen when we make the choice to go through the doors God opens for us ... instead of pushing our way through the doors we're opening for ourselves.

### **MAP OF ASIA MINOR (MODERN-DAY TURKEY) ...**



**Philadelphia** means "**brotherly love**". It had little strength, but even though it was tired and nearly worn out, it was a **FAITHFUL** Church.

**To be FAITHFUL is to have a long obedience in the same direction ... to live a life of consistency ... to be willing to be led by God's Holy Spirit ... and to follow Jesus, even when the people around you aren't.**

### **REVELATION 3:9-11 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)**

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

<sup>10</sup> **'Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.**

**11 'I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.**

The people in the Church at Philadelphia were part of a **remnant**. A **remnant** is **what's left over, a little part that's still attached, and still true**. There are people **WHO KNOW ABOUT JESUS CHRIST** and there are people **WHO KNOW JESUS CHRIST**. And the **remnant** was made up of the people **WHO KNOW JESUS CHRIST**.

Beginning in **v. 10** we could get into all kinds of end-times doctrine, which in theology is called "**eshcatology**". There are four main, different theological camps of how to read, study, and interpret the book of **REVELATION**, and each of them uses **v. 10** as one of the first points of controversy and divergence in the book. But since I'm not teaching through the whole book of **REVELATION** I'm not going to get into that angle of what Jesus is talking about here. Another study for another time.

- 1. FUTURISTS ... IT'S ALL ABOUT THE FUTURE**
- 2. ALLEGORISTS ... IT'S ALL ABOUT SYMBOLS**
- 3. PRETERISTS ... IT'S ALL ABOUT THE 1<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY CHURCH**
- 4. IDEALISTS ... IT'S ALL TO BE INTERPRETED SPIRITUALLY**

For a good, clear view of these four views, check out a book by Steve Gregg, entitled "**Revelation: Four Views: A Parallel Commentary**" from Thomas Nelson Publishers. But no matter how you interpret **v. 10** or the rest of the book of **REVELATION**, one thing is clear ... Jesus promises that the men and women, the young and the old, who remain **FAITHFUL** to Him will be spared from a time of great testing. And this truth could certainly could be applied to any future suffering, testing, or tribulation.

But regardless of the flavor of our end-times theology, I see four important questions we all need to ask ourselves ... four questions that come to the surface when we realize that we're in the last days, and Jesus Christ's return is close at hand ...

- 1. Which is my life reflecting more ... the world, or Jesus Christ?**
- 2. How is the fact that Jesus Christ is returning to the earth in judgment and reward affecting how I live my day-to-day life?**
- 3. In light of Jesus Christ's return am I taking my faith as seriously as I want to be, or as I need to be?**
- 4. Am I just a nominal Christian, with a nominal commitment? Or is my faith and my faithfulness growing, maturing, and becoming a more and more central part of how I think, how I speak, how I set my priorities, and how I live?**

I believe the Apostle Paul when he says in **EPHESIANS 2:8-9** that **it's by God's grace we've been saved**. The work of Jesus Christ on the cross paid the penalty for all our sin, once and for all. But if we're only **disciples of convenience** ... if our commitment to Jesus Christ as the **holy and true** Ruler of our lives isn't changing our allegiances, our priorities, and our ethics, then something's gravely wrong.

In **MATTHEW 7**, which is the end of what's commonly referred to as "**Jesus' Sermon On The Mount**", Jesus tells us about **the characteristics of true and false teachers**, and about **the characteristics of true and false God-followers**. Turn with me to **MATTHEW 7**, but keep your finger here in **REVELATION 3** as well.

**MATTHEW 7:21-23 (NEW CENTURY VERSION)**

<sup>21</sup> Not all those who say ‘You are our Lord’ will enter the kingdom of heaven. The only people who will enter the kingdom of heaven are those who do what My Father in heaven wants.

<sup>22</sup> On the last day many people will say to Me, ‘Lord, Lord, we spoke for You, and through You we forced out demons and did many miracles.’

<sup>23</sup> Then I will tell them clearly, ‘Get away from Me, you who do evil. I never knew you.’

Who enters the Kingdom of Heaven? v. 21 says that it’s those who “do what God the Father wants.” What’s this mean? Well, ROMANS 8:29 says that the will of God the Father is that **each of us take on, with increasing measure, the likeness of Jesus Christ**. Are you doing that? Are you looking more and more like Jesus and less and less like your old self? That’s God’s will for you ... and that’s God’s will for me.

In v. 22 Jesus says that at the Judgment Day, He will say “**many people will stand before Me and tell Me that they’d prophesied, done spiritual warfare, been involved in miracles ... and that they were full of good works.**” But Jesus says that He say to them the words He speaks in v. 23, “**Get away from Me, I never knew you.**” Pretty harsh words.

Gang, we need to be careful to understand that Jesus calls us to build the foundation of our walk with Him on **the holiness of His WORD and on the truth of His name**. You want to be able to **stand in FAITHFULNESS** with the people of the Church at Philadelphia? Then you have to believe that God knows you name ... because just like He called out to Samuel, He is calling out to you. He’s asking you to love Him. He’s asking you to walk through the doors He’s opening for you. And He’s asking you to choose to walk away from the doors He’s closing. He’s asking you to hear and to know His WORD, and He’s asking you to apply, do, and keep His WORD.

**REVELATION 3:12-13 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)**

<sup>12</sup> ‘He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; 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 out of heaven from My God, and My new name.

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

In each of the seven letters Jesus closes by speaking of the promises that will accompany our **FAITHFULNESS** and **overcoming**. Jesus is saying that **listening is where victory begins**, but that **obedience is where it finds its fulfillment**. In MATTHEW 7:24-29, Jesus goes on and talks about this same thing ... that obedience begins with hearing, but that if hearing isn’t followed up action, then it’s nothing. Jesus isn’t content with us just hearing ... He wants us to act on what we hear Him say to us ... He wants us do what He asks us to do.

When it comes to the WORD of God, a lot of people are **good hearers** but **lousy doers**. Oh, you've heard of this, have you? Many people hear a lot of teachings, and they go to a lot of Bible studies, and they have perfect attendance at a lot of Sunday School classes. Oh they're **GREAT AT HEARING**, but **NOT AT DOING**. They hear God calling their names but they don't say, like Samuel, "**Yes LORD, here I am.**" They hear the voice of God, but they're not willing to come down off their little gravel pile, and come home to Him in **OBEDIENCE**, in **DISCIPLESHIP**, and in **FAITHFULNESS**.

Remember that disobedience to God isn't just us choosing **PLAN B** instead of **PLAN A** ... it's choosing to sin, and break our fellowship with God. As we close this morning, please turn with me to the last five verses of **MATTHEW 16** ... because here we get to the root of what Jesus is saying to the Church of Philadelphia in 95-96 A.D., and to you and to me as His followers today. Here's the first two of these five verses ...

**MATTHEW 16:24-25 (NEW CENTURY VERSION)**

**<sup>24</sup> Then Jesus said to his followers, "If people want to follow Me, they must give up the things they want. They must be willing even to give up their lives to follow Me.**

**<sup>25</sup> Those who want to save their lives will give up true life, and those who give up their lives for Me will have true life.**

These verses brings us back full-circle to the **truth and the holiness of God** and to the **true cost of being a disciple of Jesus Christ**. If you want to follow God, if you want to become more and more like Jesus Christ, you've got to count the cost of discipleship in your life. And what's it going to cost you and me? **EVERYTHING WE HAVE**. Argentinean pastor and teacher, and the brother-in-law of Luis Palau, Juan Carlos Ortiz, in his classic book *Disciple* tells a great story that drives this point home ... the truth that to really follow Jesus is to give up everything we hold as precious.

Juan Carlos writes that when we come to Jesus Christ, it's like we're in a market and we find a merchant with a beautiful pearl ... and we come to him and we say, "I want this pearl. How much is it?" And here's what our conversation with Him looks like ...

**'Well,' the seller says, 'it's very expensive.'**

**'But how much?' we ask.**

**'Well, it's a very large among.'**

**'Do you think I could buy it?'**

**'Oh, of course. Everyone can buy it.'**

**'But didn't you say it was very expensive?'**

**'Yes.'**

**'Well, how much is it?'**

**'Everything you have,' says the seller.**

**We make up our minds. 'All right, I'll buy it,' we say.**

**'Well, what do you have?' the seller wants to know. 'Let's write it down.'**

**'Well, I have ten thousand dollars in the bank.'**

**'Good—ten thousand dollars. What else?'**

**'That's all. That's all I have.'**

**'Nothing more?' the seller asks.**

**'Well, I have a few dollars here in my pocket.'**

**'How much?'**

We start digging. ‘Well, let’s see —thirty, forty, sixty, eighty, a hundred, a hundred and twenty dollars.’

‘That’s fine. What else do you have?’

‘Well, nothing. That’s all.’

‘Where do you live?’ he’s still probing.

‘In my house. Yes, I have a house.’

‘The house, too, then.’ He writes that down.

‘You mean I’ll have to live in my camper?’

‘You have a camper? That, too. What else?’

‘I’ll have to sleep in my car!’

‘You have a car?’

‘Two of them.’

‘Good. Both become mine. Both cars. What else?’

‘Well, you already have my money, my house, my camper, my cars. What more do you want?’

‘Are you alone in this world?’

‘No, I have a wife and two children ...’

‘Oh, yes, you wife and children, too. What else?’

‘I have nothing left! I am left alone now.’

Suddenly the seller exclaims, ‘Oh, I almost forgot! You yourself, too! Everything becomes mine —wife, children, house, money, cars —and you, too.’

Then he goes on ... ‘Now listen —I will allow you to use all these things for the time being. But don’t forget that they’re mine, just as you are. And whenever I need any of them you must give them up, because I am the owner.’ That’s how it is to be under the ownership of Jesus Christ.”

How many times do we try and use Jesus Christ like a credit card? ... impulsively flashing our relationship with Him around when it makes us look good, or get us what we want ... abusing His grace and all He’s done for us. So often we want to have the blessings of salvation in our lives but we want to call our own shots. And gang, it’s impossible to have both. We have to count the cost if we’re going to live lives of **FAITHFULNESS**. Here are the last three verses of **MATTHEW 16** ...

#### **MATTHEW 16:26-28 (NEW CENTURY VERSION)**

<sup>26-28</sup> **It is worthless to have the whole world if they lose their souls. They could never pay enough to buy back their souls. The Son of Man will come again with His Father’s glory and with His angels. At that time, He will reward them for what they have done. I tell you the truth, some people standing here will see the Son of Man coming with His kingdom before they die.**

Jesus doesn’t play games. He’s talking here about eternally losing our soul. How cheap is your life? What are you willing to sell your soul for? Judas sold Jesus out for 30 pieces of silver. Incredible, right? But people are still selling out cheaply ... cashing everything in for temporal pleasures that will burn away at the judgment.

Is your faith authentic? You don't have to stand up and say, "**I'm denying Jesus Christ**" to deny Him. We deny or affirm Jesus Christ by the way we live, by the choices we make every day.

How are you representing God and **FAITHFULNESS** to God in your life? You don't have to carry your Bible around everywhere with you and put little Jesus stickers on your forehead or on your car ... how are you living **the life of a follower of Jesus Christ**? Jesus knows your name and He knows my name ... and He invites us to overcome, even though we may have little power in ourselves ... He invites us to overcome in His power and in His wisdom. Oh, that you and I will be found **FAITHFUL** in Jesus Christ.

**NEXT SUNDAY ... THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA: THE LUKEWARM CHURCH | REVELATION 3:14-22. COME PRAYING AND EXPECTING!**

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