

Revelation 3:20-22—The Church of Laodicea: The Lukewarm Church—Part 2

Revision—Overview

We are now in the second section of the Book of Revelation, which deals with “the things which are” (Revelation 1:19).

Revelation 1:19 NKJV

Write [Part 1] the things which you have seen, and [Part 2] the things which are, and [Part 3] the things which will take place after this.

Part 1 - “the things which you have seen”

Revelation 1 - Jesus reveals Himself to John

Part 2 - “the things which are”

Revelation 2-3 - Letters to the seven churches.

Part 3 - “After these things”

Revelation 4-5 - Rapture and Church in Heaven before the throne of God.

Revelation 6-18 - 7 Year tribulation period

Revelation 19 - Second Coming of Christ

Revelation 20 - 1,000 year rule and reign of Jesus Christ on earth then the Great White Throne Judgement.

Revelation 21-22 - New heavens and earth, eternity.

Revision—The Seven Churches

Ephesus — The Loveless Church: Loyal but loveless

(A.D. 33 - A.D. 100) Revelation 2:1-7

Smyrna — The Persecuted Church: Persecuted but Pure

(A.D. 100 - A.D. 312) Revelation 2:8-11

Pergamos — The Compromising Church: Faithful but Flawed

(A.D. 313 - A.D. 600) Revelation 2:12-17

Thyatira — The Corrupt Church: Committed but Corrupt

(A.D. 601 - A.D. 1500 and to the rapture) Revelation 2:18-29

Sardis - The Dead Church - Dead and Dying

(A.D. 1500 to the rapture) Revelation 3:1-6

Philadelphia - The Faithful or missionary Church - Underdog yet Unstoppable

(A.D. 1800 to the rapture) Revelation 3:7-13

Laodicea - The Lukewarm Church - Crowded but Christless

**(A.D. 1900 - The modern day apostate and compromising seeker friendly church)
Revelation 3:14-22**

The Lukewarm or Compromising Church

Last week we started going through the church of Laodicea. This week we will continue looking at the church of Laodicea, the lukewarm church of which Jesus had nothing good to say. Why does Jesus have nothing good to say about the last days church that we are in now? Because the church is generally full of compromise, apathy, and the pursuit of pleasure. Think about why the majority of people go to church these days—is it because they are committed to that particular local body of Christ because God called them there, or, are they there because that church best suits their preferences and/or meets their needs? In other words, many simply go to a particular church because it suits them the best and it makes them feel good.

Also the modern church is generally characterised by self-reliance and a focus on the external — is it exciting, does it make me feel good, what type of music do they sing, how many people go there, how nice is the building, is there a youth group, are there people my own age with similar interests. In contrast, biblically speaking, the primary two things to look for in a church are genuine christian love and fellowship and good verse by verse teaching or doctrine. The fruit of these two things will be people growing and maturing in their relationship with God.

Here is a quote from a news article to put things into perspective. It's the result of a survey of Americans directed by George Barna which explores perceptions of sin and salvation. I believe that the results would be similar for Australia and Western Europe. The title tells us a lot:

US Christians increasingly departing from core truths of Christian worldview, survey finds

The article starts with the conclusion:

“A new survey shows that the majority of Americans no longer believe that Jesus is the path to salvation and instead believe that being a good person is sufficient.”

The first question relates to ecumenicalism, the belief that it doesn't matter what your faith is in, just as long as you have faith in a god, whoever he may be.

“...nearly two-thirds of Americans believe that having some kind of faith is more important than the particular faith with which someone aligns.

Sixty-eight percent who embrace that notion identify as Christians, including 56% of self-described evangelicals and 62% of those who identify as Pentecostals. Sixty-seven percent of mainline Protestants and 77% of Catholics also embraced that idea, the findings show.”

It's pretty clear that when it's time for the one world religion to be enforced during the tribulation, it won't be too difficult to enforce it, because most people already think that way.

The second question relates to salvation — by works or by grace:

“Slightly over half of Christian respondents said they believe someone can attain salvation by "being or doing good," a figure that includes, 46% of Pentecostals, 44% of mainline Protestants, 41% of evangelicals, and 70% of Catholics.”

That's incredible to me, that almost half of all evangelicals, who are supposed to have good bible teaching, don't even believe the simple gospel message — that we are saved by grace, through faith. As we were reminded a few weeks back, salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, and in Jesus alone. The results only got worse for the different denominations, with 70% of Catholics denying the gospel of Grace.

So with that as an introduction, Let's start by reading the letter to the church of Laodicea and see if the situation in the church today matches with the description of the Laodicean church.

Revelation 3:14-22 NKJV

14 “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: 15 “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. 17 Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. 21 To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 22 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’ ”

We covered verses 14-19 last week so you'll have to listen to last weeks message to catchup on what it means to be lukewarm and why God would want to vomit the lukewarm person, or church, out of His mouth, and also what it means to be hot or cold. We also learned that it is possible that churches, and people individually, can think of themselves as being rich, wealthy and in need of nothing, yet their actual condition, the reality of the situation, as revealed by Jesus, is that they are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. How did they become soo deceived?

We continue with verse 20 this week, a very famous and very important verse.

The Great Invitation

Revelation 3:20

20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

This verse has been called “The Great Invitation”. Jesus gave this lukewarm church *The Great Invitation*. He knocked at their door, asking permission to come and **dine with** them, *in the sense of sharing warm, intimate fellowship with them*. We need to remember that intimacy with Jesus only happens when we respond to His knock on our hearts. Let's start at the beginning of verse 20.

v 20 **Behold...** means to look, to see, to pay attention to something. God uses this word numerous times in the book of Revelation when He is about to reveal something important.

v 20 **I stand at the door and knock ... If anyone hears My voice and opens the door:** Sadly, Jesus stood on the outside, knocking to get in. If the church at Philadelphia was “The Church of the Open Door,” then Laodicea had “The Church of the Excluded Jesus.”

David Guzik: “This statement of Jesus expressed a profound mystery. Why did Jesus **stand** outside the door? Why did He **knock**? Why did He wait until someone **opens the door**? He had every right to break down the door, or enter some other way on His own accord, but He didn’t. The sovereign, omnipotent Jesus lowered Himself to work out His eternal plan by wooing the cooperation of the human heart.”

Personal Application: how does Christ knock on the door of our hearts?

An important question to ask is, how does Christ knock on the door of our hearts? Firstly, through His word, the church, and the Holy Spirit, God uses the law to show us how sinful we are. He then shows us mercy and grace at the cross to reveal to us how much He loves us and how we can be declared innocent in God’s courtroom. Then, He lovingly disciplines, corrects, and exhorts us, encouraging us to repent and turn to him.

The next question now becomes, how does a person open the door?

Henry Morris: “The occupant must open the door. That is, he must repent of his pride and self-sufficiency, his human wisdom, and his cowardly neutrality — his lack of commitment to either the world or to Jesus.”

So the key to opening the door is to first **hear His voice**. When we give attention to what Jesus says, then we can be rescued from our own lukewarmness and enter into a “zealous” or “hot” or “fervent” relationship with Him.

Dining With Christ

v 20 **I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me:** What a glorious promise! If we open the door, He **will come** in. He won’t ring the bell and run away. He promised to **come in**, and then to **dine with** the believer.

Did you realise that in every account of Christ’s post-resurrection appearances He’s eating? Why? Because He desires fellowship. Remember how He cooked breakfast for the disciples on the beach? Do you remember what Jesus said to Peter? Peter, do you love me? Jesus was knocking on the door of Peter’s heart, seeking fellowship, relationship, intimacy and a love relationship. Jesus is saying the same to us today, “do you love me enough to spend time with me, to obey me?”

“Now, when Jesus said **dine with Him**, He spoke of a specific meal known as the *deipnon*. The *deipnon* was the main meal of the day and was a leisurely affair, not a hurried snack. This speaks of *fellowship*. This speaks of a *depth* to the relationship. *This* is where Jesus wants us, in the place of fellowship with Him. We need to see everything He said to the Laodicean church up to this point in the light of this loving desire for fellowship. Someone said, “Rebuke and chastisement are no signs of rejection from Christ, but of His abiding and pleading love, even to the lukewarm and careless.” (Alford)

Personal Application: the invitation is for everyone

v 20 **If anyone**: Notice that Jesus gave the call to *individuals*. He didn't say, "If any church," but **if anyone**.

Spurgeon said about this: "We must not talk about setting the church right, we must pray for grace each one for himself, for the text does not say, 'If the church will open the door,' but 'If *any man* hear my voice and open the door.' **It must be done by individuals: the church will only get right by each man getting right.**"

Again, who is the promise made to? The promise is made to all: **If anyone hears my voice**. The gift of salvation is open to all people. God, in His sovereignty, made a sovereign choice to give free will to mankind, when it comes to moral choices, our relationship with God, and our eternal destiny.

Gods sovereignty and mans free will

On the other hand, mankind does not have free will as far as world events go, because God has already told us what the future holds, and God doesn't change. Governments and leaders are all basically God's pick, who do God's will to achieve God's purposes in this world. God is in control of world events. You can see this clearly in the Old testament as God used various Gentile nations and leaders for His purposes concerning the nation of Israel. The same is true as God uses the nations to accomplish His purposes today, both concerning the church and end times events. Everything is working according to His plan and for His glory, and we will clearly see that when we are on the other side.

But when it comes to our free will concerning our eternal destiny, the human race has always had free will. Think of:

John 3:16 NKJV

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever** believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Notice it says "whoever believes"... The door to heaven is wide open to anyone who is willing to confess and forsake their sin, who are willing to come into the light and leave their wicked works behind.

God demonstrated this free choice when it came to eternal destiny right from the start of creation with Adam and Eve.

Now we need to consider why it's so important for us to understand why God has given mankind free will when it comes to our relationship with Him and our eternal destiny.

So let's ask, why did God give Adam and Eve free will? Why couldn't He have just put them in a perfect world with no opportunity to sin, with no "tree of good and evil" to eat the forbidden fruit from? Wouldn't we all be much better off, still living in a perfect world with no sin?

The answer is Love. It all comes down to love. Why? Because true love is based on free choice.

Imagine the hypothetical scenario where God gave Adam and Eve no other choices, where there was no “tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” where they could only obey God. God would have in essence created robots, human robots created without the ability or opportunity to disobey. So how would God know whether or not they loved Him? How would Adam and Eve know if they loved God? They wouldn't. Love is based on trust, and we make our decisions based on who we trust or love the most.

Think about it this way. When we make robots, we program them to do what we want them to do. If the robot cleans our house, washes the car and does the shopping, do we buy it a present and take it out to dinner in appreciation? Of course not. The robot was not making any choices, but simply doing what it was programmed to do. It had no choice.

On the other hand, if the husband spent his day off cleaning the house, washing the car and doing the shopping, then the wife is very much appreciative, because she knows that her husband could have chosen to go fishing with his friends instead. By his choices, the husband has chosen to demonstrate that he loves his wife more than his fishing buddies. And as a result, his wife knows that she is loved.

In the same way, God can do anything, except lie and force us to love Him. If He did force us to love Him, it would be like rape. When a man forces himself on a woman, it's called rape. But the same act of physical intimacy within a healthy marriage is beautiful. In the same way, Jesus longs for friendship and intimacy with us, but He will never force Himself on us.

Who does this verse apply to, believers or unbelievers?

The idea of Jesus **at the door** applies to the unbeliever and to the believer just the same. Jesus wants to **come in to** us, and **dine with** us, in the sense of having a deep, meaningful relationship. Unbelievers have never experienced fellowship with God, while many believers rarely experience true fellowship with God because they are not walking with God or abiding in Christ.

Remember:

The more I read the bible, the more I learn about God.

The more I know about God, the more I will love God.

The more I love God, the more I will obey Him.

The more I obey God, the more I will abide in Him

The more I abide in Christ, the more fruit I will bear (Love)

The more fruit I bear, the more glory I bring to God.

Revelation 3:21 NKJV

To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

v 21 **To him who overcomes:** Jesus' promise to the overcomer, even at Laodicea, showed that we *don't have to be* Christians who are compromising and lukewarm. If we are, we can change and become one of Jesus' overcomers.

What does it mean to be an overcomer? How do we overcome?

I answered this question two weeks ago, but I think it's worth repeating as it's so important for us to understand.

1 John 5:3-5 NKJV

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. ⁴ For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that **has overcome** the world—**our faith**. ⁵ Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

This passage shows us that we don't overcome our weaknesses by working harder or putting more effort into things, but rather simply by trusting God and depending on Him. Notice it says that the victory is past tense... **has overcome**... **So if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, it means that you have already overcome the world.** How? Jesus overcame sin and death for us when He died on the cross. Jesus has overcome the world, and because I am "in Christ," then I also have overcome the world. His victory has become mine. All we need to do is walk in the victory we have already received, to work it out practically. How? Read your bible and obey it, pray, fellowship and evangelise. Overall, simply make your relationship with God the most important part of your life and enter into His rest by ceasing from your own works. It's the fulfilment or true meaning of the Sabbath feast given to the nation of Israel.

Hebrews 4:9-11 AMP

So then, there is still awaiting a full and complete Sabbath-rest reserved for the [true] people of God;

10 For he who has once entered [God's] rest also has ceased from [the weariness and pain] of human labours, just as God rested from those labours peculiarly His own. [Gen. 2:2.]

11 Let us therefore be zealous and exert ourselves and strive diligently to enter that rest [of God, to know and experience it for ourselves], that no one may fall or perish by the same kind of unbelief and disobedience [into which those in the wilderness fell].

Just like God stopped working on the seventh day, so God is calling us to stop working using our own energy and efforts. Entering God's rest and ceasing from our own works or self effort is like driving the car down the road instead of pushing it. Entering into God's rest means we learn to rely on God's strength and not our own. The difference is like night and day. Living the christian life is a chore and a burden at best if we are doing it on our own, but easy and a blessing if we are walking by faith and trusting in His strength.

As Paul says in Colossians 2:17, observing the Sabbath is the shadow, while living by faith is the fulfilment. Remember, it's faith or works. I spent years in defeat because I was trying to live the Christian life by my own strength. Understanding the true nature of God's rest and finally accepting the fact that by myself I am incapable of living the Christian life by my own strength revolutionised my life. I went from constant defeat to victory — I began to experience the reality of who I am in Christ—I am already an overcomer. And I will continue to overcome as long as I remember my weakness and put my faith in God's strength and power, something that the church of Laodicea desperately needs to learn to do.

v 21 **I will grant to sit with Me on My throne:** Those who overcome the battle against indifference, compromise, and self-reliance, receive a special reward. They enjoy a place with the enthroned Jesus. Think about this for a minute, and consider how gracious God is. This is the worst of the seven Churches, and yet the greatest of all the promises are given to it. This shows that there is hope for all of us, that the worst of us may repent, finally conquer, and attain even to the highest state of glory — to sit on Jesus throne along with Him. Wow! What an honour.

Revelation 3:22 NKJV

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’

v 22 **He who has an ear, let him hear:** Few want to identify themselves with the church of Laodicea. We would much rather identify ourselves with the church at Philadelphia—I know that I initially did. I was quite smug as I compared our church and myself to those who have obviously gone off the rails. But then I had to look on the inside of myself. I needed to listen to what the Spirit was saying to the churches. We need to be honest with ourselves. As I have studied this letter, I myself have been challenged as to not being as hot or zealous for the things of God as I could be. Could there also be room for improvement in your own lives? Are you completely surrendered to God, and serving Him with your *whole* heart? Are you a true overcomer, or are you lukewarm?

v 22 **Let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches:** We *must* hear what the Holy Spirit says here, because He speaks **to the churches**—including us. May God deliver us from the self-reliant, compromising lukewarmness that marked the church of the Laodiceans!

More evidence for the Pre-Tribulation Rapture

Before we finish, I would like to draw your attention to yet another evidence that the church will not be on the earth during the tribulation. As you know, I believe that the church will be raptured or caught up to heaven when Jesus comes back. I’m comparing two verses, one which is repeated 7 times, word for word, in chapters 2 and 3, the chapters which describe the church age. The second reference is from Revelation 13:22, where God is speaking to those going through the 7 year tribulation. See if you can spot the difference:

Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29, 3:6, 13, 22 NKJV

“He who has an ear, let him hear **what the Spirit says to the churches.**” ’

Revelation 13:22 NKJV

“If anyone has an ear, let him hear.”

What is missing? “*what the Spirit says to the churches.*” Why, because the church isn’t there. Praise God, the church will be or caught up to heaven before the start of the 7 year tribulation period. The church is in heaven. We will be gone.

Like we talked about two weeks ago, this should be the focused hope of everyone who has come to personal faith in Jesus Christ.

Titus 2:13 NKJV

...looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

Four side notes—some things not directly related to our passage today, but are very relevant.

First side note—this is a glorious time to be alive.

The prophets predicted that all these things would happen.

Luke 10:23-24 NLT

²³ Then when they were alone, he turned to the disciples and said, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you have seen. ²⁴ I tell you, many prophets and kings longed to see what you see, but they didn’t see it. And they longed to hear what you hear, but they didn’t hear it.”

This verses applies to the first coming of Jesus, when many prophecies were fulfilled. But we can also apply it to the second coming of Christ, when many more prophecies are being and will continue to be fulfilled before our very eyes, and again we get to see our blessed Saviour.

Second side note—how do you avoid going into the 7 year tribulation period?

All a person needs to do to avoid going into the 7 year tribulation period is repent and receive the forgiveness of sins. The saddest time of all will be the great white throne judgement, where all the unbelievers are judged and sent to the Lake of Fire. I picture that next to them will be pardons for all those people that were never received. You see, Jesus can forgive every sin except the sin of not receiving His free gift of eternal life. John 16:8-11 makes this very clear:

John 16:8-9 NLT

⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, ... ⁹ **The world’s sin is that it refuses to believe in me.**

The gift of eternal life must be received, a choice must be made to believe that Jesus death on the cross was the payment in full for all the sins of all people. We also need to repent, meaning to have a change of mind and turn from the old life and instead follow Jesus. We must acknowledge that we are sinners deserving of death and that the only way to freedom is by receiving Jesus’ free pardon, that is, He declares us to be not guilty because the penalty for our sins was paid in full by Jesus sacrificial and substitutionary death on the cross — Jesus died in my place. Just going to church or being raised as a Christian is not enough. Those who refuse to believe and accept do so only because they love darkness rather than the light. They refuse to repent because they don’t want to stop sinning. Consider:

John 3:18-21 NLT

“There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God’s one and only Son. ¹⁹ And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. ²⁰ All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. ²¹ But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants.”

The third side note is a historical one. It attempts to answer the question of, “How did the church get into the terrible condition that it is in today?”

Well, at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, there began to be a vast change take place in the seminaries of the major denominations. It started in Germany. It was called “the higher critical school.” And what they did is they began to question the verbal inspiration of the bible.

Satan isn't dumb. He starts with the leaders, because they influence everybody else. What chance or hope does a church have of staying close to Jesus if it's seminary is corrupted, producing corrupt pastors, pastors who then teach false or liberal doctrine. So, inevitably, this liberalism or false teaching crept into the major denominations, and as a result the purity and strength of the church began to plummet.

“Today, it doesn't matter what church you go to, you need to check out what they teach, especially that they believe that the bible, every word, is the inspired word of God — because when you lose that, you have lost everything.”

If we don't believe that the bible is verbally inspired of God or God breathed (2 Timothy 3:16), it becomes a guessing game and man can pick and choose what they believe is of God and what isn't.

So this is the main reason that the church began to decline as a whole, they stopped believing in the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, and as a result started teaching and doing what they wanted. In many cases they even add outside sources to the bible.

The fourth side note follows from the third, and concerns the prosperity gospel.

It is one of the most dangerous perversions of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a version of Christianity *claiming that God promises Christians a healthy and financially prosperous life if only they are sufficiently faithful.*

In summary, the prosperity gospel is a false gospel that substitutes a vision of present earthly happiness for a vision of the final restoration of heaven and earth that the Bible anticipates. It is a trap that ensnares the poor and the weak and leads them away from the love of Christ. It is a potential danger even for those who avoid its more obvious expressions. This is one of the defining doctrines of the last days Laodicean church. No church or person is as self-sufficient and self-reliant as one caught up in the prosperity gospel.

Conclusion and Application

Now I would like to finish by drawing application from Revelation 3:20, which is Christ calling us to fellowship with Him. The following is base on ideas and excerpts from *Jon Courson's Application Commentary*.

Firstly, who has seen the classic picture by Holman Hunt of Jesus knocking on a door.

When it was first unveiled, it is said that a certain critic said, “You've made a mistake, Mr. Hunt. There's no handle on the door.”

“That was intentional,” the artist is said to have replied. “The door opens only from the inside.”

If this story is true, Holman Hunt was right, for it's up to you and me to let the Lord into our lives. He won't kick the door down. He won't force His way into our hearts. Most people use this verse as a call to individual salvation, but did you realise that it was actually written to individuals in a self-satisfied congregation.

Again, is Jesus talking to people meeting in His Name who are supposed to be Christians? Yes. And is He saying He's on the outside and wants to come in? Yes.

Well, the question becomes, "how does a christian get to the point where the Lord is on the outside? How does a church get to the place where it thinks it's doing fine but is spiritually bankrupt?"

Now, if it happened at Laodicea, do you think it can happen to us as a church, and us individually? Yes (see 1 Corinthians 10:12).

Because Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture, turn with me to the Song of Solomon for the answer. The story is of a king, a bridegroom in love with his new bride. After experiencing intimacy with her, the next morning finds him outside her door....

Song of Solomon 2:10–15 NKJV

¹⁰ My beloved spoke, and said to me:

**“Rise up, my love, my fair one,
And come away.**

¹¹ For lo, the winter is past,
The rain is over and gone.

¹² The flowers appear on the earth;
The time of singing has come,
And the voice of the turtledove
Is heard in our land.

¹³ The fig tree puts forth her green figs,
And the vines with the tender grapes
Give a good smell.

**Rise up, my love, my fair one,
And come away!**

¹⁴ “O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,
In the secret places of the cliff,

**Let me see your face,
Let me hear your voice;
For your voice is sweet,
And your face is lovely.”**

¹⁵ Catch us the foxes,
The little foxes that spoil the vines,
For our vines have tender grapes.

“Come away with me,” says the bridegroom. “The rain has stopped. The birds are singing. I want to hear your voice. I long to see your face. And remember to watch out for the little foxes—the subtle temptations that will hinder our love if they are not dealt with.”

After hearing his invitation and warning, the bride responds....

Song of Solomon 2:16, 17 NKJV

¹⁶ My beloved is mine, and I am his.

He feeds his flock among the lilies.

¹⁷ Until the day breaks

And the shadows flee away,

Turn, my beloved,

And be like a gazelle

Or a young stag

Upon the mountains of Bether.

Here is the bridegroom outside the door, saying, "Honey, come on. It's a glorious morning. I want to take you to new heights, to hear wonderful songs, to be on guard against the little foxes."

And what does his bride say?

"It's too early. You go play on the hills, and I'll catch up with you later."

What happens next?

Song of Solomon 3:1, 2 NKJV

By night on my bed I sought the one I love;

I sought him, but I did not find him.

² "I will rise now," I said,

"And go about the city;

In the streets and in the squares

I will seek the one I love."

I sought him, but I did not find him.

What happened here is something that can happen to us corporately or to you and me individually. It's the danger of doctrinal drowsiness that says, "Lord, I know You're calling me to come away this morning and seek You. But I'm yours and You're mine. I'm robed in Your righteousness, and my name is written in Your book (yawn), so I'll meet with you a little later... zzz...."

As the day progresses, however, and the trials arise, we cry, "Lord, Lord! Where are You?" Like this bride, how often we say, "I don't feel the Lord anymore. My day is empty. My night is dark. Where is He?" The answer is, when He called to us we chose to say, "I don't need to go to Bible study. I don't need devotions this morning. I don't need to expend the energy because I'm His and He's mine. I'm already safe and secure in Jesus."

As the story unfolds, we see that as the bride seeks her bridegroom she does, indeed, find him. But it takes energy. So, too, Jeremiah 29:13 says, "You shall seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all of your heart."

Jeremiah 29:13 NKJV

And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

Jeremiah 29:13 NLT

If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.

There's no room for laziness in our relationship with the Lord.

"But I'm saved," you say.

Yes, you are.

“The Lord is mine and I am His.”

That’s true, too.

“And I can just be at peace and rest in the finished work of the Cross.”

Absolutely.

But watch out for a dangerous doctrinal drowsiness that keeps you from responding when the Lord pulls on the strings of your heart at any time, saying,

“Come away, My beloved. There are some mountains I want to show you, some songs I want to share with you.”

You see, the Lord comes to us constantly, saying, “Drop what you’re doing and take five minutes and talk to Me,” or, “Take ten minutes and worship Me,” or, “Take fifteen minutes to pour out your heart to Me.”

“The Spirit is like the wind,” said Jesus. “No man knows from where it comes or where it goes” (see John 3:8). Hand gliders understand this. When they get a report that the thermals are perfect, they don’t say, “I can’t go today, but maybe tomorrow I can fit it in” —because there’s no guarantee the winds will blow the same way tomorrow. Avid hand gliders move when the wind is blowing.

The same is true in spiritual life. When I sense the thermal of the Spirit, I must respond immediately. “But that’s irresponsible,” you say. “What about obligations or family responsibilities?”

Actually, the Holy Spirit knows about those. He’s not going to say, “Oh, I forgot. You have that meeting,” or, “Forgive me, I didn’t know about your business obligation or your family commitment.”

No, the Holy Spirit knows our schedules. Therefore, it’s not the conflicts with our core responsibilities that are the problem. It’s the times we think we deserve to watch movies or tv for an hour or two, or to play games, or to read a book—for those are the times the Lord calls us to come away. This is my personal experience, and I don’t regret giving up TV and movies and reading books. I get to have so much more time reading the bible, and I’m so much more satisfied than I was before. There is no way I would go back to being a TV and book junkie, especially since it took me 20 years to make the decision to rid myself of those little foxes, those subtle diversions and distractions that keep me from greater intimacy with God. How I regret the wasted time. Remember, “Only one life, will soon be past. Only what’s done for Christ will last.” Now, there are other things that the Lord is asking me to moderate, like playing maths games and reading international news that relates to prophecy. I’m still working on that.

I also find it extremely interesting that the bride located her bridegroom by giving a detailed description of him to her friends (5:10–16). In other words, she realised where to find him not when she sat in her room, but when she ran out into the city and said, “Let me tell you about this one whom my soul loves.” The same thing happens to me. I’ll be wondering where the Lord is and why I’m not sensing His presence, when suddenly there’s someone for me to tell about Him — a witnessing opportunity. And sure enough, as I talk about Him, I experience intimacy with Him.

Dear sisters, precious brothers—the key to intimacy in your Christian walk, the source of enough spiritual energy to skip on the mountains of fellowship, and share with your neighbours is to say, “YES,” when the Bridegroom knocks at your door.

The thermals are perfect. So get out of bed, grab your hand glider, and start flying!

In practice, this simply means that we listen to and obey the still small voice of the Spirit and consequently experience the exhilaration and joy of walking with Jesus, moment by moment, day by day.

Remember that Jesus leaves the abiding and obedience as our choice. Again, He never will force us to draw near to Him. A famous quote by A. W. Tozer that I have always remembered is:

“Every man is as close to God as He wants to be.”

Finally, remember that we are already overcomers. We can't do things on our own strength, but rather by trusting in the victory that Christ has already won for us.

1 John 5:4 NLT

4 For every child of God defeats (overcomes) this evil world, and we achieve this victory **through our faith.**

If we frustrated with our poor spiritual condition, it is because we are trying to live by our own strength, our own will power. Our prideful and deceptive heart has deceived us. We need to surrender and realise that Jesus has everything we need and that it's only through Christ that I can do all things. Jesus says to us, My strength is made perfect in your weakness.

2 Corinthians 12:19 NKJV

And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.