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Cooperation Part 2

Pastor John Bendixen (WTB)

Scripture reference: Ephesians 3:20 (NKJV) Revelations 1:3 (NKJV); Revelation 1:9-11 (NKJV); Revelation 2:5-7 (NKJV); Revelation 2:12-16 (NKJV); Acts 19:8-10 (NKJV); Acts 19:17-40 (NKJV); Acts 20:1-3,6 (NKJV), Acts 20:17-21 (NKJV)

Glory. Praise You Jesus. Glory to You Lord. Glory to You Lord. Father, we thank You for the message that comes to us today through your messenger. We thank You Father that he speaks from You, he speaks for You. Thank You, Father, that he ministers in Your very presence, Lord. And that the words that he speaks today they will be spirit and they will be life Lord, to us. And Father, I pray and I ask for every ear to be attentive, and every heart to be open to receive Lord with a true heart, Lord, in the precious name of Jesus, and we all say, Amen.

Pastor John:

Hallelujah, glory to the Lord. Praise Jesus. Praise Jesus, just agree with me this morning, that you are ready to receive, that your minds are free of distraction. And that you will be ... have the full capacity to receive the fullness of what God has for you today, both here in this auditorium and all those that are watching on Livestream, that God will touch you move upon you, and you will experience the fullness of God - today, today, in Jesus name, amen. Amen. Thank you, you may be seated. Glory to God.

What a good day to be in church. It's a good day. We'll see how how our schedule goes but we'll try and see if we can do a water baptism before I go to be with Brother Jerry in the end of March to do president's cabinet in the USA. So this is an annual meeting that Pastor Sharon and I have to do. It's part of our participation and directors of Jerry Savelle Ministries in Africa, we go and report back to all the President's Council members in the USA. And this year, we leave on the 27th of March. So if you didn't know that is a Monday. And we'll see if we can put a water baptism on the on the shedule before then. So if you want to be water baptized, please contact the office let Miranda know if you are wanting to be water baptized so we can just assess how many people want to be water baptized and that'll kind of help us to determine where we do the baptism and what we have to plan for it and organize for it. If it's just one person I can do you in the bath. You know, but if it's more than one, we might need a bit more planning around it. You understand? Amen. Praise the Lord.

So lots of good stuff happening in the ministry. And we'll keep you in the loop as things develop. And as things move along. And, well, we're going for the maximum, we're going for the highest level attainable, we're stepping up and we're stepping in to all the things that God has for us. Last couple of years, the Lord has made it clear that we need to be big and bold. And we have been that we have endeavored to walk and work with God.

And well, you have been a witness and a testimony to the good things that God has done for our ministry. For all of us, over the last number of years. When everybody was unable to make progress because of COVID, we made more progress than we did without COVID. Much, much more. So, praise the Lord. Glory to God.

Okay, who is the final authority in your life? Now, the answer that you give me might be obvious. You might say, "It's the word of God, it's Jesus." You might say that - obviously that's the answer. But the real answer comes when your faith is tested. Because whatever you do in a circumstance or a situation of pressure, whatever you do, that's where your real authority lies. So, if you are believing God for a healing, and then you look for lots of alternative ways of getting healed, then you need to say, "Well, how far does my faith in God go for my healing?" *Ja?*

Now, there's a lot I can teach about that. I don't want to be too distracted by that today. Because I've got other things to say. But it is important for you to face who and what is the final authority in your life. And the obvious answer is Jesus, and the obvious answer is the Word. But the real answer is in the way you live, and the choices you make when you're under pressure. So, when you have prepared for the pressure, then you will revert to the power of God's Word. If you haven't prepared spiritually for pressure, then you are by default, recognizing some other authority that's in your life, that you constantly revert back to, on a daily basis.

Last week, I was ministering to you about *Cooperation*. And I'm going to go straight back into where I left off with you last week. And I told you, I was going to tell you about the church of Ephesus, and the book of Revelation, and how the apostle Paul, the apostle John, how God used them both. And what they had to say and what they, what they were used by God as instruments to declare, is relevant to us as a church today. If we call ourselves the church, what do we mean by that?

Well, if we call ourselves the church, then we're actually just talking about a place where people meet, or the meeting of people. If we call ourselves a congregation, then we are labeling ourselves as congregating people. Like a herd would congregate at the waterhole, we call ourselves a congregation, which means we congregate. I don't want to be called a congregation. Neither do I want to be called a church. I prefer to be called an Ecclesia, because in the New Testament, that's what the apostle Paul called the church on purpose, called the church, the Ecclesia.

Why? Because the Ecclesia is defined as a group of people that are citizens of a particular place and then are separated to govern, to exercise rights of authority on behalf of the people. So, they were called from the people, on behalf of the people and the rule was to govern and to rule and to pass legislation for the benefit of the people.

If we recognise that we are an Ecclesia, a church that is a called out group of people that are authorised to pass legislation, to make rules if you like, to exercise government on behalf of the people, then we begin to understand what the role of Ecclesia or what we use so frequently, the church of the Lord Jesus is called to do.

We are not just called to church on a Sunday and raise our hands and praise. That's the good part of church. We are not just called to church to be in a building so we can make a statement to the rest of the world – look how many people we are, and we recognise Jesus as our Lord. That is not really the big deal about what we are called to do. The big deal of what we are called to do, is that we are called to be

authority on behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ, for God's people, on the earth. That's what we're called to do.

Ephesians chapter 3 verse 20 says... So, remember I finished last week saying, *we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works*. So, what are the good works? The good works are the things that He has called us to, planned beforehand so we can exercise those good works as an Ecclesia – a governing people that know what's good for people – especially the church. Ephesians 3 verse 20 says, ²⁰ **Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us (Ephesians 3:20 NKJV)**

If God's going to do something exceedingly abundantly, above what we ask or think, what's the determining factor of that? It's according to the power within us. Now, if Jesus lives in you, then you have the fullness of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in your spirit man. Therefore, together with Jesus that is in your spirit man, He comes with all power. Hello? When He comes into you, He doesn't come with a little part of who He is, He comes into you with all of who He is. So then, how is it that the apostle Paul says, "According to the power that works in us?" So, it is not how much power comes with it, it is how much power is working in you. That's the key thing – how much power is working in you. How much power is working in you.

And so, I am going to minister a little bit about this, this morning – remember we are talking about co-operating with the Lord, co-operating with the Holy Spirit and co-operating with the Word. Revelations chapter one verse three – I read this to you last week, **Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophesy, and keep those things which are written in it, for the time is near. (Revelations 1:3 NKJV)** Now, that scripture was written many years ago and you may say, but a lot of time has gone by. I have this to say to you, that all things will happen in the fullness of God's time.

And there is very little that we can understand from a timing point of view, where God's order and God's time is according to His prophetic timetable, and the way we measure the Word of God and time. For us to think that we can understand everything that is in the heart of God for the timing of God, we would be naïve. Even Jesus said only the Father knows the fullness of time and the end of time. Even Jesus was not told what that is. So, for us to say, "We can definitely determine what, when is the fullness of time," I think we're being a little naïve. However, if it was the fullness of time then, certainly we're nearer to the time now. And that is something we can definitely agree on.

Now, if you don't mind, I'm going to read some Scriptures out of the book of Revelation. And I read from Revelation chapter one, verse nine. ⁹ **I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.**

¹⁰ **I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day**, in other words, he was in the Spirit at a time when God designated He wanted to talk to him. **..and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, ¹¹ saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First**

and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea" (Revelation 1:9-11 NKJV).

So, there are seven churches. And he's writing a message to seven churches. To the church in Ephesus, write this, chapter two verse one. I'm going to read from verse two, ² **"I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; ³ and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. ⁴ Nevertheless, to you, to the church in Ephesus, I have this against you, that you have left your first love. ⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen (Revelation 2:2-5 NKJV).**

So, wait a minute, you haven't grown weary, you've been patient, and you've labored, and you've done good works but I've got something against you. And you have become weary at doing what? At, you've lost your first love. ⁵ **Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent. ⁶ But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷ "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches (Revelation 2:5-7 NKJV).**

Now he's writing to the people of God. He's writing to a people that would have understood what Ecclesia is and would understand that they're not just a people that are gathering but they are a people that are called to govern on behalf of God's people, to legislate, called out from, to govern for, and to govern on behalf of. So when he's writing to the churches, he's writing to the Ecclesia. First point, he's commending them for the things that they've done right. Second thing, he says, "But I have something against you and you've lost your first love."

Now, I want you to repent quickly so that I don't come and remove your place among the great and the called-out ones. You've lost your first love, so repent quickly and come back to your senses. Repent quickly. He goes on to say something that's quite remarkable and I'm going to get to it in a minute because you'll see how the Lord gets us to the end of the message today. I need to talk to you about the church in Pergamos so that we can get the fullness of what the Lord is saying in this message today.

So chapter two, verse 12, ¹² **"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: Well we know from Hebrews that the two-edged sword is the Word of God. So he who has the Word of God, the sharp two-edged sword. ¹³ "I know your works, so he is talking to the church with a sharp word, the Word of God is coming. ¹³ "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Wow, I mean the apostle John is writing by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, talking about the fact that this church, Pergamos, is dwelling where Satan's throne is. In other words, where Satan's center of influence is, where Satan's center of manipulating humanity comes from. **And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. So, this is****

where Satan's throne is and where Satan dwells. This is the center of Satan's influence.

¹⁴ But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. ¹⁵ Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. ¹⁶ Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth (Revelation 2:14-16 NKJV).

So here are two places where the word of the Lord has come and He's talking specifically about the Nicolaitans. He's quite strong about it and He, and He's talking about the fact that He hates these kind of people - He hates what they stand for. I mean, the word hate is quite a strong word. Right? If you study the word hate, it means in the *strongest possible terms*, it says; *I will resist, I will stand against and I will have nothing to do with people who do this*. So, the people who allow the works of the Nicolaitans to be evident among you, that's a problem. So, the church in Ephesus, He says, "But I commend you for the fact that you hate the work of the Nicolaitans." In the church in Pergamos He says, "I've got a problem with you because you tolerate the works of the Nicolaitans." Are you all with me? Are you ready to get blown away today? Amen.

I'm going to just progress to the life of the Apostle Paul for a minute and I'll come back and bring this all together. Acts chapter 19, verse one, **¹ And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples. Verse 8, ⁸ And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months.** So he arrives at Ephesus and for three months he goes into the synagogue and he preaches boldly about who? Not about Abraham. He's preaching about Jesus. Right? In the synagogue. ... **reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. ⁹ But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way - the way of the Lord - before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks (Acts 19:8-10 NKJV).**

It's just one little point I want to make here. This is not the crux of my message, I just want to make a point here for you. He goes into the synagogue and he preaches, then there are some that rise up against and speak against what he is boldly preaching. You get that? The apostle Paul, contrary to what he has done in many other places. He doesn't keep doing it until he's arrested. He withdraws himself. He goes away from the synagogue and from the people that stood against him. And he goes to another venue, another place where he's accepted, where he's received.

And for two more years, he preaches there. So he withdraws from where he's contested, to a place where he's accepted. You will find that this happens in the life of an apostle, a special messenger, where there are times and places where God will call him to go specifically, and then he will meet with resistance. And then the time will come where God will lead him to withdraw, and go to another place so that the Word of God can spread.

And it's clear here that for the next two years, the word spread from Ephesus, to all of Asia. So where did this message spread to? The other six churches that are written about in the book of Revelation. Six more churches were founded from the original church of Ephesus. Because the apostle Paul was there, and he was called to that region, to take the gospel to them. Amen. So he gets a contest in one place, withdraws himself, goes to another place, his word is accepted, the Gospel spreads.

But surely, God would have known about one and not the other. When you're called you flow with the Holy Spirit and then you've got to go where the Holy Spirit guides you and leads you to go so that the release of the gospel can happen. Sometimes He'll want you to exercise Ecclesia authority, and that will have repercussions. Will have consequences to people, and circumstances will happen around that. That's what you have to do when you're called to do something for the Lord. Just have to do it.

Verse 17, ¹⁷ **This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.** ¹⁸ **And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds.** ¹⁹ **Also, many of those who had practised magic, brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver.** ²⁰ **So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.**

I want you just to see something here. I read from the book of Revelations about two churches, the church in Ephesus, and the church in Pergamos. And in both instances, God chooses to take issue with the Nicolaitans. I want you to see that there's an event that is happening here in Ephesus, where people are getting saved, they're getting born again, there have been encounters with Jesus. And they come and they bring all of their books that are giving them access to spiritual powers. That's giving them access to knowledge that will allow them to gain some kind of connection to the spirit realm, or at least two different kinds of manipulations of the way people believe. Magic. What is there in South Africa that we know as a South African culture, it's actually everywhere in Africa, that we can say, "We know this presence has a negative effect in the culture." "Is it witchcraft?" "Yes. It's witchcraft." It's the practice of communicating with the spirit realm through ancestors. And there are people that come and say, "We have the authority to connect through magic, rituals, ceremonies, different things, we have the ability to connect with the spirit realm. And then we also have the ability to curse people." Yeah? So what do you think that is? Is that not the same thing that happened in Ephesus? They had ways, magic ways of connecting with the supernatural.

The supernatural realm is very real. And there are different ways that you can access the supernatural realm. There are dark ways, and there are God's ways. And we as Christians think, because we come and we bring our praise and we bring our worship and we bring our offerings to God, that we think that there are not other people that know how to do this. Well, they know how to access spiritual power. Even if it's dark power, they know how to access it. We have to be clear about this, that all of that is deception. All of it is manipulation. All of it is influenced to get you to

believe something that has as equal power or greater power than Jesus, then the Father in heaven. So it's real.

There are many people that say today, that all this kind of “mumbo jumbo” stuff. This kind of scary, supernatural stuff is not real. If you just apply science and logic to it, it will all be explained through science and logic. Well, they clearly deny their own beliefs in whatever they believe in, in order to hold that opinion. Because by having such an argument, they release themselves from having to can't be confronted with Jesus who died for them. That's the bottom line. This was such such an event that all of these books that people brought to be burned, equaled 50,000 pieces of silver, you understand that for them to measure this, they would have had to, this had to have been such a big event that people said, “Hey, look at all these people bringing all these books. I wonder, what's this worth?” This was an inspired Holy Spirit evaluation of a repentance. Why is the number 50 000 pieces of silver so important?

Well, it measures the transforming of people's hearts away from something that they had put great value into purchase, and releasing what they purchased for something that they couldn't buy, but they had to believe it. There is a lot to say about that. I don't want to, I got to keep moving along with what the Lord wants me to minister today. Chapter 19, verse 21 and I'm going to just read into chapter 20. So, I'm going to sort of, just going to give you the headlines of this passage of Scripture.

²¹ ...Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.” ²² So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time. ²³ And about that time verse 23 there arose a great commotion about the Way. About the Way, meaning the Kingdom of God and Jesus. ²⁴ For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. (Acts 19:21-24 NKJV)

Will everybody just say this word profit. [*Congregation saying, “Profit”*] No small profit. [*Congregation saying, “No small profit”*] In other words, there's lots of money involved here. Money, money, money. I sound like ABBA now and if you don't know what ABBA is you're too young. So, ²⁴ **...silver shrines of Diana who brought no small profit to the craftsmen.** ²⁵ **He called them together with the workers of similar occupation. And said, “Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. ²⁶ Moreover, you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people saying that they are not gods which are made with hands.” (Acts 19:24-26 NKJV)**

They are not gods that are made with hands. Are you listening to me? They are not gods that are made with hands. If your house is taking the highest level of value in your life, it's a god made with hands. What about a car? What about a business? Is that where your highest level of authority lies in your life? That which is made with hands? Or is Jesus? These guys, they are making an argument. And now he, this Demetrius is calling everybody together. And he's saying ²⁶ **...this Paul has persuaded many to turn away from the gods that are made with hands. ²⁷ So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the**

temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised, and magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship.”(Acts 19:26-27 NKJV)

What did we just get reading, that God began to work through all Asia. And all of these people that heard about the Way, the way of God, the kingdom of God, Jesus, they all came to bring their books that they had so much value in, about magic, about accessing the power of other gods, they came to burn their books. This guy says, “We’re in danger of losing our power of our prosperity, because they are taking the reason for prosperity away from the people. If people stop believing in the great goddess, Diana, then we have no more job.”

28 Now when they heard *this*, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians!” Can you, can you just picture it for a moment? Just imagine all of you here in this church today, all of you in this building, you stand up and you begin to chant, “Great is Diana, great is Diana of the Ephesians! Great is Diana of the church of Witbank! Shut that Pastor John down. Shut him down, he’s causing lots of people to walk away from all of our beliefs for so many years, and so many years. All the gods that we’ve worshipped for so many years, from which we’ve made so much prosperity, from which we’ve been so successful, from which we’ve been able to live amongst all of the peoples of Witbank and Johannesburg and South Africa. Shut up that Pastor, he’s destroying our very way of life and our income and our prosperity, shut him down! Great is Diana! Great is the gods of South Africa! Great is the gods of prosperity!” Can you hear it?

29 So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theatre with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul’s travel companions. 30 And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, (Acts 19:28-30 NKJV) so he, he’s got this boldness of the Spirit, and he wants to go and take them on, he wants to go and challenge them, what they’re saying. Yes?

This is not a man who lacks authority or lacks boldness. This is a man who says, “There’s a great confrontation happening now between the gods and the living God. I’m going for it, let me at them.” Can you see Paul? He’s been beaten many times, he’s been shipwrecked, he’s been in prison, he’s had so much stuff happen to his body, and he knows that he survived all of it; and he said, “This bit of crowd, they can’t beat me. Let me at them.”

30 And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. (Acts 19:30 NKJV) Well, when did they get such authority over the apostle? What was happening to the apostle? His calling was pulling him, but the disciples recognized, this is a moment when you’ve got to withdraw, not go fight. You know there was another time that happened in the Old Testament? This is where King David he was wanting to go and fight and did fight the sons of Goliath, the brothers of Goliath. And one of them nearly killed him except for one of his captains came and saved him. Then they all get together and said, “No more will David go and fight against the brothers of Goliath and the sons of Phillistians lest the light of Israel be extinguished.

That meant that the men around him recognized there’s another time and another place, and there’s other things that have to happen here. So where does that leave

me? That leaves me with an accountability to the Ecclesia. There are times when the Lord will say to me, "Sic 'em, John. Get at them, say what you have to say, go after it." Then there are times where some will say to me, "Pastor John, you've done your bit, it's our turn now. This is not the time for you to fight anymore, this is a time for us to take the fight." Watch the space. God is raising up others to take up the fight against the Nicolaitans. Against the Demetriuses of the world and speak for God about the way of God, but the kingdom of God and about Jesus.

And ³¹ **Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater.** ³² **Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused.** What happened here was that the people that were connected to Paul saw the spirit of confusion and said, "This spirit of confusion has the danger of snuffing Paul's life out because of the great confusion." "So don't come here Paul." ³² **Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together.** That sounds like the devil. That sounds like the enemy of God who's wanting to just, just create chaos. Do you know of another time that he did that successfully? Was it not when they sighed, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." They didn't even know what they were saying. But they just knew they were riled up by the devil to take Jesus's life.

³³ **And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, and wanted to make his defense to the people.** ³⁴ **But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"** There is a great chaos and confrontation happening here in Ephesus. ³⁵ **And when the city official quieted them down. He talks to them and he says, who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Zeus?** This is who they believed in.

³⁶ **Therefore, since these things cannot be denied,** he's using logic on them now, **you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly.** You ought to be quiet and do nothing rationally, ³⁷ **For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess.** ³⁸ **Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another.** ³⁹ **But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly. (Acts 19:31-39 NKJV)**

What's the lawful assembly? It was their version of Ecclesia. And so the church is the ecclesia for Jesus. And they ... do you recognize what's happening here? Do you see the alternative pattern happening in the system of the world? "Great is goddess Diana. Hey guys, they're not speaking against your gods. They got no blasphemy against your gods and besides, this cannot be denied that this god has been around forever and Zeus himself dropped Diana down onto the earth. And we do not deny that? And so if you have anything that you have to say, let's bring it into a legal Ecclesia." Huh, come on. Are you all with me today? Are you finding this interesting? Bear with me it's gets even better.

40 For we are in danger of being called in question for today's uproar, there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering.”(Acts 19:40 NKJV) Did they have a reason? What was their a reason? We losing our profit, we losing our business, we losing the motivation for people to do things. So, we losing our grip on what people believe. And therefore our money is going with it. Our very existence is going with what people believe. They had a reason. This man says this is not enough reason.

1 After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to *himself*, embraced *them*, and departed to go to Macedonia. 2 Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece 3 and stayed three months. And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. 6 But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas... (Acts 20:1-3;6 NKJV) Now I want to read to you verse 17, of chapter 20

17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. 18 And when they had come to him, he said to them: “You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, 19 serving the Lord with all humility... (Acts 20:17-19 NKJV) here is the underscore of someone who's called into the ministry. Is able to live among you, **19 serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and many trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews**; you will find that it's an earmark of someone who's genuinely called by God to bring a message, there will be trials, there will be tears, there will be many, many things that happen. But you will find a mark in such a man that serves the Lord with humility, and will be able to dwell among people. This is an earmark of a called one.

In our modern day world, technology and housing, and air travel, and many things have caused the separation from people that have been called to the ministry from the people. The average people. This is not the, this is not the correct pattern of God. This is a modern day phenomenon. So if you have any questions, you shouldn't be questioning the way of God you should be questioning the modern day phenomenon, phenomenon, where the church has elevated leaders into the position of kings and kings living palaces that create for themselves a separation from the people. And to have more on this message, you should listen to my message from long time ago on *Kings, Shepherds and Servant leaders*, which I can't go into today.

20 ...I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, 21 testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 20:20-21 NKJV) Okay, now, I'm going to go back to the book of Revelations. And remember, in the Book of Revelations, he had a problem with Ephesus. Ephesus He says, “You guys have done so good, you have checked out false apostles, people that have called themselves apostles and people that are called, you've tested them, you've checked them out, and you've stood the test. You've been patient. But this thing I have against you, you've lost your first love.” Yes?

But He says, “But I also like the fact that you are against the Nicolaitans.” To the church in Pergamos, He says, “Hey, I want to commend you for being able to live

where satan's throne is and to be where satan dwells, and stand there and live there, and be there, but I've got something against you and that is, you love the Nicolaitans." Yeah?

So, this Nicolaitan thing is a big deal. I'm going to give you just a quick history. Remember in the Book of Acts, there was a moment where the apostles said, "We have to give ourselves to the Word and to prayer so that we know what God is leading us to do. We can't wait on tables anymore. So, let us appoint to the tables, let us appoint men that are full of wisdom, full of the Holy Spirit and function in faith." Yes?

One of those men, besides the more prominent ones in the New Testament that we read their stories are, Stephan and Phillip, besides those, there was a man that was appointed and his name was Nicola – Nicolas, Nicolas. Nicolas was the only man that was appointed amongst all of those men, he was the only man who was not a Jew. He came from Asia. He was also a man that followed all of the gods; he followed all of the gods. But he converted to Judaism, became a Hebrew. And then when people were getting saved, he converted again and accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

This would indicate that this man has a very open-minded view of life, and he has a capability to flow wherever, wherever he feels; this is the right truth, this is the way things get done. This is where God is. He is very fluid. He is able to compromise, he has got an open mind about everything and he will change his mind about who God is, as he feel this is where the power is, this is where the movement goes. Nicolas – compromising to suit the occasion. This is the man they appoint to serving tables.

So, when the Lord addressed through the apostle John, through the Book of Revelation the Nicolaitans, it refers to a doctrine that at its core encourages worldly participation, leading people to indulge in sin and lower godly standards, and in this way, the Nicolaitian doctrine conquers God's people. By accepting the fact that you can have an open mind about what is taught, and what to believe, and what next doctrine is the most prominent doctrine. So, have an open mind to have a very fluid walk with God and go with the next doctrine takes you. The doctrine of the Nicolaitians. Where did this come from?

It came from Ephesus, which was the seat of many gods. So remember when I told you the other day, I said to you, maybe last week or the week before I said this to you, "People don't mind you standing up in a sporting event or doing say, I'm a Christian" they say, "you worship your God as long as you let us worship our gods." That's what happened in Ephesus. We'll tolerate Jesus as a God, if you say he was a god, we'll tolerate your, you know, theological arguments and your philosophy that this Jesus is a God, but don't take Diana away from us. Don't take Zeus away from us. Don't take all these other gods, we also believe in them. That happened in Ephesus.

Now, that whole region Ephesus, was the hub of all of these beliefs. So, when you go to Pergamos, and, and to Laodicea, and to all of the other towns, Philadelphia Church of the seven churches, all those places were churches that were named after where the town was. So Pergamos was a town in which he was addressing the

church of that town. Okay? So from that point of view, you can understand that Ephesus was the big city, the big hub, and from there this whole region was affected by the same chaos, and the same belief in other gods from which people profited. Now, this whole process that is happening, that the apostle Paul has now just been exposed to, that I've read to you in the book of Acts, where they raised up people and created confusion and all kinds of issues, this was all because people don't want to lose their hold on the future. They didn't want to lose their hold on the financial ability of what had already been established, or to what they can connect to. So they caused the great stir.

So, our business is to cooperate with God, to cooperate with the Holy Spirit, and cooperate with the Word of God, not to cooperate with the system. So I asked you again today, what is your level of authority? What is the final authority in your life? Is the final authority in your life money? Is it your work? Is it your career? What is it? What is the system that holds the highest level of authority in your life? This is not for me to say, this is for you to determine. Why Pastor John, why would you go to all of this trouble to bring all of this out today, when you're talking about cooperating with God? Well, my question to you is, who else are you cooperating with, rather than with God?

You see, what God spoke to the apostle John to do by writing the letters to the churches, he's saying, "I want to recognize you for the good that you're doing. But as the God whom you serve, and as the Heavenly Father, I must correct you where you are wrong." And so I'm just, for this part of how the Holy Spirit wanted me to flow, I'm talking to you about two churches, Ephesus and Pergamos. Because in these two churches, He directly addresses the works of the Nicolaitans. And I say to you, if you allow other things to have a higher priority in your life, then this Ecclesia and what's best for this Ecclesia. Effectively, what happens is you put other things at a higher level of cooperation for you, then to cooperate with God. Just watch this now. Then, when God comes in, He says, "Listen, I want to commend you for this." You know, in our modern day culture and our modern day world, we kind of, we like to have God say things to us, like, "Well done. You've done good." You know, in a more vernacular way, "Sharp sharp." Right?

I mean, we like it when, when people kind of affirm us. I mean, in the modern day world we're big on affirmation. You know, I mean, it's a big thing and we just don't like it when people have something to say that's not nice and something that's corrective or bringing correction. Don't bring that to me. I don't want to be corrected, I know what's best for my life and I know how to run my life and who are you to tell me something different? Well, you know, I told you last week, if Jesus or our Heavenly Father is the greatest Father in the universe, then He's not going to leave you the way you are headed in a direction that's going to be harmful for you. He's got to bring correction. So how is He going to do that? Well, He's going to talk to you, but He's also going to talk to the messenger that He sends to you. And so I'm here to say, "That the greatest value that you can bring to the body of Christ - to the Ecclesia is to cooperate with God through the Ecclesia."

And so what is going to...? What is going to be your biggest challenge? Well, it's already confronting you and God has already chosen to bring this out amongst us. Great is the goddess Diana! Great is the goddess Diana! So what does that translate

to in our modern day world? Great are the financial institutions of the world. They lend us money, so that we can buy houses and cars and goods. And even though we will pay our interest, great are the financial institutions - do not talk against them. Great are the financial institutions, do not talk against them. And that message of living debt-free – shut those apostles up, for their message will undermine all of our profitability going forward.

You as a Christian have the right to be healed through the Blood of Jesus and by His stripes. Shut those apostles up, rather go to the medical institutions, rather go to the doctors of the world, rather go and do all of those things. Great is the medical fraternity. Great is our medical aid.

Oh you, you can give your body to worship God. Do it, whatever you like, you radical Christians, you. You can go to your Christian worship concerts. But don't judge our sporting greats. Don't judge the high-profile champions – we have the greatest reward system on the earth - those people who make it to the highest levels of sport, we will reward them, we will profile them, we will give them accolades. We will raise them up in communities, great are the great sportsmen of the world.

Oh yes, you know what's coming. You know what's coming next. You, you guys can study the Bible and go to your Bible College, and you can know God all you like, but don't touch our education system. Great are the private schools of the earth. Great are the schools that give our children great education and go to universities and great are those degrees that they get from universities, you don't touch... great is our goddess of education.

I have this against you that you tolerate the Nicolaitans. Who are those people? They are the compromising ones. Have an open mind, have a free spirit. And you can choose and pick and choose whatever you feel is the greatest. It's okay to just flow. Go with the flow. Don't make too much of a stand. Don't be too radical. Don't only just accept one God, you must be open-minded to all these gods. It's the spirit of Nicolaitans it is the way that the church has been conquered.

You know what's happening in the spirit realm right now? Shut that Pastor up, shut him up, shut him up, shut him up. Don't let him... Don't let him pull the wraps off this thing that the spirit of Nicolaitans has entered into the church. And the church is no longer functioning as an Ecclesia it's just congregations of people. The gatherings of people that all have the same mind of Christianity and they come for their worship concerts and they come for their great togetherness and they praise God. But in the heart of it, we still bow to the education, we still bow to finance, we still bow to all of the systems of the world and we take our authority from them and so we shall live and die. This thing I have against you, the church, that you have allowed this spirit of the Nicolaitans, this spirit of compromise into your life." "Don't touch my money. Don't touch my education. Don't touch my performance of what I can achieve, because that's where I feel good." Huh?

"So Pastor John, why is it that you are preaching this message just to the Witbank church?" Well, well, I mean, Witbank, being South Africa, being the people that will listen to me. Well, God only needs one message to go out in our modern day world for this to be a standard. And someone's got to be willing and ready to preach it. So,

I finished with this. Once again, I know you don't want me to finish. Hey, I mean, you're enjoying this. This is good teaching stuff. I mean, this is like taking a bandaid off a thing that you thought was a scar, you look and said, "But there's nothing here." Yeah all these big institutions that we think we are so powerful in our lives when God brings revelation He just rips the whole thing off. He says, "There's nothing there. There's no power there. There's no authority there. You just got to believe Jesus, you got to believe the Word of God, you got to stand for the Word of God."

This is where we make a difference. This is the reason we were called, this is why you're alive right now in this earth. So that you could be in this Ecclesia and walk with this authority here. This is the reason we were called to people like Brother Jerry, who was calling from Brother Copeland, because years ago, God called him out and said, "Preach prosperity, so that He can pull down the institution of credit and interest and all those things that are destroying My church, My people." If we have ears to hear and eyes to see, we will recognize that Oral Robert said, "We can't go to the universities of the world." He started Oral Roberts University. So he said, "People can come to this university and worship the Most High God and still have knowledge, that the world system, hold so precious and dear to themselves.

Why do you think it is that Christian universities are not really succeeding, as well as other universities and have those big name labels? Well, because the system doesn't want them to. To the measure, you will see to the measure that they've succeeded, you will see there is a measure of compromise. So, I want to finish off by saying this to you.

This was huge in my heart this morning, when I was praying in the Spirit and I said to the Lord. I said, "Lord, I know what I've got to preach from last week already. I know what I've got to preach and what I've got to teach today." And I said, "But Lord, this is so big. I'm asking You to just allow the people to receive this. Just allow them to have, to have ears to hear." And that's what the book of Revelation says, "He that has ears to hear, let him hear to every church he that has ears to hear, let him hear." And so my prayer this morning was, "Lord, let them hear."

That's why I said what I said before I preached even. But I want to say this to you. In my heart, I have a great appreciation for you. Truly, I spent a lot of time this morning thanking God for this people, for you. Because there are not many places in the earth that I could go and preach this message. There are not many people who would be ready to hear what I've just said this morning. Because what I've taught here is radical. It is a revolutionary message. Well, it's not, it's not just that you can hear it, that I can preach it to you. It's that you have opened your hearts to it. And you have received it into your heart and into your life and that you have chosen to do something about it and say, "We are going to live like this Pastor John." And we don't know what that whole journey is going to look like, but we do know this, that whatever God needs us to repent from, we will repent from it. And we will turn from that way so we no longer are compromised by the Nicolaiton message and we will turn back to our First Love. And we will love You, Lord, and we will give our all to You, Lord. And we will just give our lives to You. And we will give You what if, and I don't know how it's all going to turn out. But I've got to start with a repentance.

You know, one of the things that God says is, the blessing that you will receive is that I won't remove your stick from the candlestick holder. Until you say, but that seems to be a negative, positive, you know, it's like, you know, if you do this, I won't remove you. Well, why would that be such a big deal? Do you want to get removed from your assignment and your mission and the purpose that you were born for? Do you really want to be removed from that so that you no longer can fill what your mission and your assignment and your purpose for God putting you on this earth at this time you want to be removed from that? So that's not a positive, negative, that's a complete positive. I still stay connected to what my purpose is. I've still got meaning, I've still got purpose, I've still got a whole reason to live here. That's big. And so I thank you, I thank you. I thank you for where you've allowed us to come as a body. I thank you for opening your heart, and for working with me and Pastor Sharon, and the pastors and the leaders and all of our joint Ecclesia here. Thank you for hearing God. Thank you for allowing me to explore how God wants us to go with this church that has brought us to this place.

Because I didn't have a roadmap when we started twenty-something years ago. I didn't have a roadmap. I just knew that there were some things we could not tolerate in our church and what we had to stand for. I've wrestled with the seeker-friendly movement, how all these churches were growing. I wrestled with it. I wrestled with so called Faith Ministries that turned away from the faith message. I wrestled with people that called themselves prophets and then you don't see any prophetic thing happening, but they have a huge following. I wrestled with people that would call themselves apostles and have huge numbers of people that would be submitted to their ministries, and actually what they were preaching was nothing - a lot of it was not in the Bible.

In Africa, we have a big problem where people raise themselves up and call themselves bishops and archbishops and call themselves all manner of titles, and they've got no substance. In Africa, we've got lots of people that pull gimmicks, sell bottles of water for an anointing touch, so that people can be set free. Come on, you guys know what I'm talking about. And some guys that have huge following, they draw huge volumes of money, they pull stunts like laying hands on somebody that rises up out of a coffin, to draw attention to their ministry so that they can... and then they call themselves - the shepherd.

South Africans will know what I'm talking about here. I've wrestled with these things. So, Lord, why do You have me preach and Pastor Sharon and the people that are connected? Why do You have us preach in our Bible schools and all...? Why do You have us preach the standard of cooperation, of togetherness, of Ecclesia, of unity, of the power of prayer, of doing things where we are accountable to each other, where we submit to each other. Where the love of God and the words that we speak are to build each other, to strengthen each other, to hold each other accountable to the life of God? Why do You have me preach it all the time? For this, right here.

When I started our church, and the numbers were exploding all over the place. People wanted me to become the next biggest preacher in South Africa. And I stood publicly, and I said, "I've been a senior executive at a big company in South Africa. I know what it is to do marketing. I know what it means to bring positive messages out there. I know how to sell a product. I know how to position, an organization." But I

rejected all of that. Weekly, publicly. I stood against that I said, "God doesn't want us to do that." Doesn't want me to become the popular faith voice.

I've struggled with even messages amongst our faith preachers, people that I respect. They will say things like, "If you're preaching a faith message, then you will draw lots of people." I suppose that's what happened to the apostle Paul. All the time. He only had positive results. He only had positive results. I mean, people had to keep him out of the city of Ephesus because they would have killed him. He already had declared that he was supposed to go to Jerusalem and then on to Rome. At the very least, they would have held him back so that he couldn't fulfill what God wanted him to go and do.

And so, I have a deep, deep sense of gratitude and appreciation and thanksgiving before the Lord for where we find ourselves as a church, now, for this moment, for you all that are here with me. I am deeply grateful. I want to say that for many, many years we had to stand in faith just to have money every month so that we could get by. And there were many months, in this church, that we didn't have the money to get by and most of you don't even know about that. And now, we are in a place where we are requested by God to go big and bold, step in and step up. We are requested by the Holy Spirit to go for the maximum, the highest level attainable.

I want to say thank you to all of you for coming along with us, for making your own choices and your own decisions to say, "I'm not going to let the pension fund be my future. I'm not going to let BA," not British Airways, "Bachelor of Arts degree be the substance of my identity." I just shot another holy cow by naming the god. It's the BA god or the BSc god. "Well, at the very least you need to have a Bachelors of something." Well, I suppose that's the way the Apostle Paul approached it too. His answer would be, "I'm a bachelor for life." [*Congegations laughs*] "And if anybody has the courage to come along with me..." Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Praise Jesus. Won't you all stand with me, please?

And so, I am led of the Lord to... I thought this was going to take me another week, but God gave me the way forward so that I could get it done today. So, cooperation. As you go forward in your life, God wants you, the Holy Spirit wants you to cooperate with Him. If you take your logic and your logic patterns and apply your logic for future to your decision that you will make for your future, please remember that you are applying logic to your future - not faith.

"So, Pastor John, what about all the people that are going to make a decision for God, how are they going to make an income?" If I am a spiritual leader worth my salt before the Holy Spirit, do you not think that that is a big issue between me and the Lord?

Do I have the answer for you today? Some, not all. But today, I am not going to tell you about it. But there are things that God will have us pursue, as a people, that will bring about the things that we are asking. Well, what do we do? How do we follow God with this process? He will lead us, He will guide us. He will never forsake us. He will never let us down. I will tell you this, I would rather put my trust in the Most High God than in the other gods that are the institutions that want to tell you that is the

only way you can succeed. So, I know you have other questions. But for today, I am done. Amen. Amen. Praise the Lord.

Would you make this declaration with me? And say, "I am a son of God. And I thank You, Lord, that You have called me and that I am born for such a time as this. Lead me, Lord, guide me so that I may follow You, and walk with You in the ways that You have planned for me. And the good Shepherds' voice, I will follow and other voices, I will not follow in Jesus name. Amen.

Let me tell you, that is a powerful declaration right there. You make a commitment daily to the Lord Jesus and say, "I am going to follow You, rather than follow other voices." Because there are many voices that shout loudly. Because there are many gods out there that are being worshipped and idolized. And they are not without significance. But we serve the most High God. And my prayer is that this message, along with all the other messages, *The Invitation*, *Abortion*, and *Cooperation*, that these messages will be powerful messages in your life.

They will set a standard of where God wants us to go, and how He wants us to flow with Him. And I pray that you will have a continuously open heart to receive what God has for you. Hallelujah. Praise the name of Jesus. I pray that whatever you put your hands to will prosper. No weapon formed against you will prosper. You are protected and you are shielded by the Word and the Blood of Jesus. He gives His angels charge over you and all that you are supposed to accomplish, and the places that you are supposed to go in. Hallelujah. And I pray that you will have the ability to follow all that God has for your life according to the power that is working within you. Do you say amen to that? Then we are in agreement. And in the power of agreement and the prayer of agreement, so it shall be, so be it. Amen. Go forth and prosper. Go forth in joy. Go forth in peace. Go forth in the glory of the Most High God. Amen. Bye, everybody.

Those people that are supposed to meet with me afterwards, you know who you are. We will meet in the auditorium in about 15 minutes or so. Thank you.