Unveiling God's Church

Paris Reidhead

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Please feel welcome to download and listen to the audio version of this book. Hear the thunderous, awe-inspiring and convicting voice of Pastor Paris Reidhead as he delivered these messages live to the congregation.

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Foreword

Pastor Reidhead was a man who loved God's Church. Those men and women willing to live for the Lord Jesus Christ at whatever cost, to the despoiling of their goods, to poverty, to tribulation, and even to death. A company of people banded together by the Spirit of God in love for Jesus Christ, in worship of the Triune God, and in mutual strength and encouragement and in witness.

The Lord through His precious grace burdened Brother Reidhead with a heart for God's people. His mission to edify, exhort, reprove, proclaim and comfort the Body was always a labor of love. Always towards the mission of glorifying our Lord Jesus.

This burden would lead him to the Cross where upon abandoning Himself to the Lord he was filled with the Glory of Christ and in that time and time after, he would look back on his first 14 years as a pastor and missionary and shake his head and say "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!"

He would say his usefulness to the Lord really began when he experienced union with Christ in death and resurrection and was filled with the Spirit of God to truly become the hands, the mouth, and feet of Jesus Christ; 14 years after becoming a pastor. No longer a religious man trying to do right, but a man who was the reflection of Christ, in obedience to his Master and from whose control he could not escape. A man who on his knees, broken would continually ask, "Lord what would thou have me to do?"

In *Unveiling God's Church*, a newly published collection of the late Brother Reidhead's sermons on the first three chapters of the Book of Revelation, we gain deep insights on how we should think about the Church, the Body of Christ. We learn the only reason for the Church existing is to glorify the Lord through the lives of its members and to bring Him honor, fame, praise and love. We learn job number one of the preacher is to deliver to the Lord a Bride pleasing to Him.

And thus in God's Church our hope is that every day, in every circumstance, and in every situation, God and His sovereign love is going to use my life to bring glory to His Son. But this only happens when each member is perfected, when each is filled with the fullness of Christ. This singular purpose is the reason He gave us pastors, teachers, and prophets, to bring the Body to perfection: not to build ministries and monuments to men in the pulpit.

This perfecting or maturing of the Body of Christ, His Church, is the process of growing into the royal priesthood. Every believer is destined to become a priest, a minister unto God. There is no laity and clergy distinction in this Body. And each member, grown into perfection, is revealing the power and character of Christ through: (a) intercession for sinners, (b) power over Satan, (c) fruit of the Spirit-filled life, (d) witness for Christ and (e) gifts of the Spirit. This is how the Church is to glorify Him by revealing Christ in every believer. This royal priesthood is His perfected Church.

Unveiling God's Church starts with the revelation of the Head of the Church, King Jesus. And who is the Christ the Lord wishes His Church to know, but the one with eyes like a flame of fire, in regal attire, hair white as snow, a countenance like the shining sun, and a voice like rushing waters. And all that come into His presence drop like dead at His feet. This King Jesus is

Lord of the Church, no longer meek and lowly on a crucifix, but King of kings. And all shall bow the knee before His glorious presence.

Then with all the wisdom of a spiritual father, Brother Reidhead sheds understanding and guidance on the journey that leads to God's Church being perfected, blessed and sustained. From the strengthening of the saints to the awareness of sins that defile the Church, we are taught, implored and prayed for. *Unveiling God's Church* is a timely message and a blessing for the people of the Lord.

Michael McPherson, LLG Ministries

The Unveiling Of Jesus Christ

Will you turn please to the first Chapter of Revelation. I am reading beginning with the first verse of Revelation, Chapter 1. This is a tremendously important book that has been long neglected, and I must confess that I may be one who has neglected it. John promises blessing to those that read it, and therefore I propose that at least for several Sunday evenings we will be studying and reading from the Book of Revelation, asking God to minister to our hearts through it.

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to shew unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John: Who bare record of the Word of God, and of the Testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand. John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before His Throne. And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own Blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen"

Just by way of introduction, certain basic truths which we have read, which are obvious, but which nonetheless need be emphasized. First, you will notice the spelling of this title. It

did not say Revelations, as so frequently you hear the Book pronounced the "Book of Revelations." It is not. It is The Revelation. The Revelation given by the angel to John concerning Jesus Christ. And the first word, the first statement rather in this first verse is, "The revelation of Jesus Christ." Thus we anticipate that the theme and subject of this Book will be the Son of God, and will not be horsemen and plagues, but it will be Jesus Christ. It is always important that we should understand the purpose in the author's writing. There are a great many details that could themselves become ends, unless one knows the purpose. So whatever you read in this Book, you know that the theme is the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The word Revelation is apokalupsis, and it means unveiling, or the uncovering, or the disclosing. Perhaps the picture that we would have in mind of this word is a great sculptor that is commissioned to give to the community, to the city perhaps, work that commemorates the death of the soldiers in war, or some event of progress in the life of the community. He works in his studio, and finally, under cover and canvas and so on, the work is placed in the park on the proper pedestal, but it is not unveiled.

And they have the Mayor and the City Officials, and the public gather. The dedication is made. The artist, the sculptor is presented, and then there comes that moment when the workmen take the rope off the ties, and there is the apokalupsis, the unveiling, the uncovering, and the disclosing. That is what you have in this word in the Greek. The idea is, something that has been hidden, or imperfectly seen that is now unveiled. And so it is the Revelation of Jesus Christ, the unveiling of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now it is not redundant. What you have in this Book, perhaps you have nowhere else in the Book. You have it intimated. You have it suggested. But this is the Revelation of Jesus Christ in His post-resurrection and

post-ascension glory. It is the Revelation of Jesus Christ as He is now. Presumably the reason that it was given was that as the Church drew away from the time of His ascension, there would be more and more speculation as to what kind of a person He was, and how He looked, and in what state He was at the present, and therefore God saw it wise and right that there should be an unveiling, a partial unveiling of Jesus Christ as He is now, and as He will be unveiled. So it is thus the discovering, or the revealing of the Lord Jesus in His present state and His present glory, as well as that future unveiling that will come to various people in various conditions, that has not yet happened.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto Him. Jesus Christ, the Name is the Name of His Incarnation, the Name of His humility, if you wish. "Thou shalt call His Name Jesus."[1] That Holy Thing that was born of Mary. It is a wonderful Name. How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ears. We love the Name of Jesus. But it is still the Name that He was called as a little lad in the streets of Nazareth, and in His home.

I remember on 7th Avenue in Minneapolis one day, driving around the curve, and I was just amazed that someone had the temerity to put the name on his door, Jesus So-and-So. I could not believe it. I was quite offended until I realized that this is a common name, and it was as many of the Old Testament names, a name which included some idea of God. We would say Jesus because of the Greek derivation. The Hebrews would say Joshua, or essentially the same word. Jehovah-Savior. Now Jesus.

[1] Matthew 1:21

In 1 John 4:2 we read, "Every spirit that confesses that Jesus is come in the flesh, that Jesus is God come in the flesh." For God became flesh and dwelt among us, and that God who became flesh was called Jesus, for He should save His people from their sins. This is the Revelation of the man, that walked, that grew tired, that had no place to lay His head, that went out into the Garden when all of His disciples went to their homes and to the homes of their friends, that sat there till the morning dews settled upon Him, because no one invited Him to go to a home, and there was no home of His own.[2] And this is the One who was tempted, and tested in all points such as we are, the one who was acquainted with our griefs and bore our sins, and died for us. This is Jesus that is being revealed.

This is the man that stood there while they scourged Him, and while they buffeted Him, and while they pressed the crown of thorns upon Him. It is the Man that walked, and ministered, and lived, and died. This man who was God who became man, and yet perfect man, though very God, very God and very man, Jesus, the anointed, Christos. This was the Messiah. This was the one around whom all the promises of the Old Testament gathered. And so when John says, the Revelation of Jesus the Christ he is saying, He is the one of whom the prophets spoke. He is the one in whom all the hope of Israel rested. He is the only one that can bring life to the dead, and bring forgiveness to the wicked and the guilty. He is the Anointed One, the Christos. This is Jesus Christ that is being revealed, and shall be set forth in that which is to follow.

And God gave to Jesus Christ a revelation concerning that long before He became flesh. Jesus Christ is God. This is the testimony, that He is God. But as man, He had this revelation of what was to be. And so, just as a revelation was given by

[2] Matthew 8:20

God to the Son concerning those things that were to be, so He, to whom the revelation was given, passed it on to us, to show unto His servants, we who are His slaves, the things which must shortly come to pass. He said, "A servant does not know what his Lord doeth, but you are not servants." You are friends. And you know what I am going to do. I do not want you to be in darkness. I want you to know. And so the Lord Jesus Christ will take those who trust Him and love Him, who are His bond slaves, and He will share with them that which the Father has shared with Him, and He will do it by an angel through John. This is what we have in that first verse. John who bears record of the Word of God and of the Testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

The year this is written is probably, most likely, 96 A.D. Now remember that our Lord was born, according to the calendar, which would make this 96, our Lord was born 4 B.C. Now that is strange, is it not? But the calendar was so changed that you cannot say that our Lord was born in what you would call 1 A.D. It was 4 B.C., because of an error that was made in calculation. So that would mean that John is writing one hundred years after the birth of Christ, or 70 years after the ascension of Jesus Christ, (well actually 67 years and some months after the ascension of Christ). Is it not marvelous that God did allow one man to reach this point? Seventy years-in that time it would have been three, nearly four generations figuring 20 years to a generation…three and a half generations of people.

And John is the young man that was on the ship with his brother James when the Lord called him. And John is the young man who impetuously entreated his mother to speak in his behalf, "Let James sit on your right hand and John on your

left."[3] John is the young man that leaned on Jesus' bosom. Probably, very likely, he is the young man whose cloak was caught and who had to flee away naked when they came and took the Lord, for John forsook Him. No man stood with Him. And John may have been one of those two on the road to Emmaus. We do not know. We do know that he came to the empty tomb and looked in, with Peter running impetuously pass him and into the tomb. John stood there and saw the grave clothes lying as though they were wrapped around a body. They had never been unwrapped. That is the miracle of it. They were just lying there, as though still encasing a body, but collapsed: and the body had passed through them, and the napkin that covered the head was right where the head would have been, but there was no head underneath. John looked in and saw the collapsed grave clothes. And then John was the one who saw the Lord, beheld Him, was with Him, and was there throughout each occasion of meeting. And now John has had the privilege of living 67 years after the ascension of Christ. And John says, "I bear record of the Word of God. I know. And of the Testimony of Jesus Christ. I am telling you. I have stood for this, and of all the things that he saw."[4] How gracious God was to allow John to live past the normal period of his life, an aged man now, probably 100 years old. But he has all of this that God has allowed him to see, and that now permits him to share.

And remember this. John was not there naturally. Now James was beheaded. John has lived to a ripe old age, past the average age, even in that day. All the other Apostles are dead. All have died violent deaths. Well how did John escape? He did not escape. History tells us that the man who wrote this, who recorded it for us, was captured and tried in Greece by the

[3] Matthew 20:21
[4] Revelation 1:2

Roman authorities there, and was sentenced to die by being boiled in a cauldron of oil. The day came for the sentence. He was placed, according to the records and the tradition, into that cauldron of boiling oil, but whereas it had been tested for its temperature and was capable of causing death, John was placed into it, and was brought out unharmed, instantly, miraculously delivered so that there was no effect. Now Roman law made it clear that one sentenced for a crime, and having that crime executed, could never be tried for the same crime again, and could never have the sentence repeated. And so John was not forced to some other death. He had survived, but he was no longer welcome. And so he was exiled to the Island of Patmos, where we find him saying that "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day." In the Island of Patmos, for the Word of God, and for the Testimony of Christ. Now this is John. And he is testifying of the Word of God that was explained to him by the Lord Jesus. He is witnessing of what he saw the Lord Jesus Christ do, and what he himself experienced.

This third verse is a precious verse: "Blessed is he that readeth."[5] I am of the same opinion that my friend Robert Walker[6], who is the Editor of Christian Life Magazine, that American Christians probably buy more books and read fewer of them than any other company of Christians on the face of the earth. I would not be surprised but what all of you could drop your head just a little and close your eyes a trifle at the books that you bought with every good intention. I do not recall just who it was, but one of the Presidents of Harvard University said, "If you will read 15 minutes a day something worthwhile, you will become ultimately an educated person." I believe that it is imperative that we read. The only means by which we can

[5] Revelation 1:3

[6] Robert Walker (1912-2008) a pioneering journalist and the founder of Christian Life Magazine

understand, converse with men long dead is through that which they have written. I think that if you have deprived yourself of the blessing of reading good books you are impoverished indeed, and I do not know to what degree you read. And if you find difficulty in reading yourself because of weakness of your eyes, the suggestion I make is that you get someone to read aloud to you. In fact, I would encourage every home to read aloud for periods, and encourage you to read aloud to yourself, and to someone else. It is a very, very profitable thing. I think that we could say, "Blessed is he that readeth" (period) that is if you read something worthwhile. There is that which will defile undoubtedly. But the reading of the Word, the reading of literature, the reading of the Alliance Witness will bring blessing to your life.

But the only book in all the world that I know of where God Himself promises special blessing for the reading is the Book of Revelation. I do not know of any other book where God commits Himself in contract form, saying that if you read this Book, and hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein, you will be blessed of God. And for this reason I would urge you to read it. I wish every one of you would read it before the week is out. I wish you would read it again and again.

I know what is going to trouble you. You are going to get hung up on a horn somewhere. That is what will happen. You will get caught on a horn, and you will say. Well what does this horn mean? And then you will put the Book down. Look, just do not try to swallow all the horns. I tell you, just leave them there. They are there. Do not worry about them. And toes. Do not worry about toes either. And scorpions with tails. Do not try to understand everything you read. You read, and you will be amazed at how much you will understand of the moral quality and teaching of this Book. And there are some things

you will never understand. But that is all right. God promised blessing if you read it, and would hear what you could hear, and keep what you heard. You know a lot of people tell you they have trouble with the Bible. They do not understand it. I do not believe that. The trouble with them is that they do not obey what they do understand. That is right. If you read this and you just obey what you do understand, and do not worry about what you do not, you will be a better person before the week is out, because God has promised blessing to those that read.

Now notice the address, "John to the seven churches which are in Asia." We are going to study those churches in considerable detail, and it was this study of these churches which moved me to come to this wonderful Book. "John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you."[7] Inevitably God's desire is that we should comprehend Grace. Grace is His free and unmerited favor. Grace is that which God had in Himself toward those that deserved nothing from Him but wrath, and in whose behalf He moved in love to bring blessing. Grace. Grace. This which is only found in the heart of God and experienced only because there is God with such a heart. If anyone is ever gracious in that deepest meaning of the word, it is because he himself has known grace. But grace is manifested not only in the fact that God let the sun shine on the just and unjust, and let the rain fall on the wicked man's field, and kept air in his lungs, and kept life to his body, and protected him and gave him government to watch over him, and gave him a land and place in which to live in some measure of freedom. It is not only in this civic grace, or common grace, that we see God's grace, but that ultimate revelation of God's grace, when God Himself became flesh and dwelt among us. The Lord Jesus

[7] Revelation 1:4

Christ stripped Himself of all of His royal insignia, and became man. You cannot comprehend such a cost.

I have in times past used an illustration of a person who is well, identifying himself with a leper, and giving his health to the leper and taking the leper's sickness. I suppose this is a mild illustration of grace. But mild. Because you carry in your body incipient death, and with every breath you breathe it is nearer death. Every pulsing of your heart. And so for you to die a few years earlier is just a few years early. But here is eternal God, eternal God, God the Son, who has had no contact with sin, nor with the results of sin in humanity, who voluntarily takes a body like your body and a nature like your nature and becomes found in your fashion with all the appetites you have, and capable of being tempted in all the areas that you were in order that without sin He might die under your sin, and for your sin. This is what is in the word grace. Jesus Christ becoming what you were so that you could become what He is.

And this is the divine order, grace and peace. And there will never be peace until you know grace. That is why the Scripture says, "There is no peace sayeth my God to the wicked."[8] And when you look outside and see the unregenerate, apparently having fun, living in their lust and in their immorality and their thievery, and their lying and all that characterizes the life of the modern pagan, you say, "My, they must be having a good time." No, God says, they are not having a good time. He says, to the contrary that the wicked are like the troubled sea which casteth up its mire and its dirt.[9] And there is the double flow. There seems to be the flow of pleasure on the surface, but then somewhere underneath there is the backflow that catches and takes the residue of sin and tosses it up into the conscious

[8] Isaiah 57:21
[9] Isaiah 57:20

again; and just as the sea will get the mud and the dirt and the filth that is there, and cause it to boil up.

Years ago my father took (My boy is here and he will be after me. It will be all right.) But my father took my brother and me fishing. In front of the dam, at Rock Rapids on the Mississippi River, near Minneapolis. We went out on the ice breakers and sat there and dangled our line, tied around our finger, through the slats in the ice breaker and caught little Rock Bass. And we were all very delighted with these Rock Bass until something happened. I do not know what caused it. But all of a sudden we looked out and saw the boiling spots on the water. And they came nearer and nearer. And we saw sludge and mud, and mud, and filth, and all we could think of was that this was the picnic table where our fish had been eating. And the fish did not look nearly as good when we saw where they had been. And if I recollect correctly we just turned the fish pail over and let the fish go back home. We did not want to take them home with us if that was where their home was.

And it gave me an illustration of the casting up of mire and dirt that is boiling up. Now you see that is what happens to the wicked. There is no peace, because God wrote His law on the human heart. God inscribed what is right on the human conscience. And deep down in every human spirit, there is this awareness of God, and this awareness of right and wrong.

So what has to happen for a person to live in sin is this, that with his intellect he has to set up a countercurrent: It is right to lie. It is right to steal. It is right to lust and to commit immorality. And so he gets a current and tries to get where the current is flowing. And so the current begins to flow this way, and he gets in it. And he is caught along with it.

But there is another current flowing another way. And there is the current of revelation. There is the light that lighteth every man that comes into the world. There is this deep undercurrent that is flowing in his personality. It is wrong to lie. It is wrong to steal. It is wrong to commit adultery. It is wrong. It is wrong. It is wrong. And the top current is flowing this way. It is all right. Everybody does it. It is modern. It is the day. It's…. And then the other: It is wrong. It is wrong. It is wrong. And the two currents meet. And in that meeting, there is the boiling. And ultimately it comes to the surface, and to the top. And there is no peace until there is grace. For it is grace that washes away the stain of sin, and sets the current of the conscious in the same direction as the current of the light that lighteth every man that comes into the world. Grace and peace are from Him, and only from Him. And no one is ever going to know peace…

Psychiatry has gotten probably the best business in all the world, because it has developed techniques which give a temporary relief and which, because they have no answer to the stain and the guilt of the conscience, and because they have no way to take the spots out of Lady Macbeth's hands, and leave them there -- no way to cleanse the stain of sin. Psychiatry and the techniques of it are valuable adjuncts if they can lead to some permanent cleansing and release of the spirit. But they have the best business in the world, because it can be constantly repeated over and over and over and over and over and over again, because there is no answer. Grace and peace are from Him.

Arnold Williamson, one of my Pastor friends out in Lynbrook, Long Island, was very well taught in much that has to do with pastoral counseling, in psychiatry. He was talking to one of the outstanding psychiatrists out on Long Island about what our message is, that no one can really know God savingly until he knows himself completely, and that God demands that we

understand the worst about ourselves when we come to Him, and that God has made provision to cleanse us from the worst, and not just whitewash that. And that the only way to really begin with God is to come knowing all of one's sin and all of ones uncleanness, and all of ones stain, and all of ones vile past. And bring it to God in an open declaration, and an outpouring of confession, knowing that God does not love one bit the least because He knows all there is to know that is bad about you. And when the psychiatrist heard that he said, "You know. Your office ought to be right next door to mine. And when I have got them to see themselves I ought to send them in to you to have you help them do something about it. I can get them to see what is there, but I have not any answer for it. But you have an answer. Why did not I understand that?"

This is not what the churches say. This is not what they mean. I have not heard this. But this is what God's Word says, that the person comes to Jesus Christ broken. And I think that one of the great calamities of easy believism in the 20th Century is this, that we have let people recognize that they were sinners without getting them to recognize their sins. The old Brush Arbor down South --You know, everything good is not north of the Mason Dixon Line, by any means. There are a lot of things down there we had, you do well to get, including corn bread and fried chicken. You would just be well off if you had some of the things that are common down there.

But one of the things that God used was the old Brush Arbor Meetings. Split a log in two, put it up on a couple of stakes, and have a meetin' for about four weeks, between the time you laid the corn by and the time to harvest. And they would come. And in those old days, Peter Cartwright and… -- Oh they were giants in the land in those days. None of these little pea shooters, you know, that get up there and spit alliteration at people. That was not it. These were men that thundered out on

the righteousness of God, and the heinousness of sin, and then the only way you could ever be saved was to break before God and leave your sins and come to Christ. Some old mountaineer, bootlegging, whiskey making, ruffian, shoot to kill, they let sit there until the Spirit of God broke open his filthy heart. When the invitation was given, he would come and throw himself across the split log altar; people would gather round him, and say, "Oh now, Bill, tell them everything. Tell them everything." And the fellow would put his head back as though he were calling hogs on a mountainside, and he would scream out to God about his lying, and his stealing, and his fighting, and his drinking, and everybody knew it anyway. He was not breaking any news to anybody. He had lived with them, you see. But you know what happened? Here in the midst of his people, he opened his heart and he got all that sin that had been buried there, those deep pockets of infection, they all broke open. And he let them all out. And then they, after he had finished with everything, telling it all, then they would say, "The Blood of Jesus, God's Son, cleanses Bill from all sin." When Bill met Jesus Christ, he was a new creation. And there were not any deep pockets of infection lying down there. It was all broken. That is why some of you have not found peace, because you have never broken before God. You have forgotten that God is going to love you just as much. He knows the worst about you. You will not shock Him when you tell Him what He has known all the time. Everything you ever did you did in the presence of God. Grace and peace from Him. He loved you when He knew the worst about you. Grace and peace from Him which is. He is alive now which was. He is the eternal God which is to come. He is the everlasting Father. And it is going to be always. Never change. And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, the Prince of the kings of the earth. Is not that a wonderful exaltation of Jesus Christ?

Let me read it to you. Faithful witness. He said, "I only speak those things that my Father commands me. I do not speak of myself. I speak as I receive commandment of the Father."[10] He is a faithful witness. Remember that day in John 6 when He had a large crowd. Everybody likes a crowd. Do not let anybody fool you. And the Lord Jesus did too. He had them there. He had a large crowd. And they said, "We are your disciples. We are your disciples." He said, "Oh, is that so?" "Yes. Now if you will just do one more miracle, then you really have got us. Do something like Moses did. Moses brought bread down from Heaven. You do that. Then we will be yours, and we will never leave you and go to anybody else."

You know there is a sort of commercial disciple outfit. You put in your order, and you can get as many as you want, if you are willing to do it. And they were sort of around there, wondering now whether we have got the right man. And so, the Lord said, "Well, wait a minute. I am the bread that came down from Heaven. If you eat me, you have life. If you do not eat me, you do not have life." Now wait a minute. Wait a minute. We are not cannibals. No! "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood hath life, everlasting life."[11] "And he that does not, has not life." And they looked at Him and said, "Now listen, Mister. You have gone too far. We do not understand that. We are willing to be your disciples, but when you talk about eating your flesh, and you talk about drinking your blood, it is too much for us. We are through." And that day, His whole congregation got up and walked out.

Well, sort of discouraging, is it not? Yes, Sir. I think of Martyn Lloyd Jones[12] in England, who followed G. Campbell Morgan[13]

[10] John 12:49
[11] John 6:54
[12] David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981) a Welsh Protestant minister and medical doctor. He was minister of Westminster Chapel in London for 30 years.

in Westminster Chapel. He had been saved through Dr. Morgan's ministry. And he began to preach. He was a Puritan, born out of season, a great man. If I ever have the opportunity of bringing him to New York, you can be sure you will have him. And Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones took the pastorate, and he began to preach…. the sovereignty of God, the glory of God, the majesty of God, the nature of repentance, the Lordship of Christ. And the congregation dwindled, and dwindled, and dwindled, and dwindled, and dwindled. And one Sunday morning in a church that seats eighteen hundred, he had sixty people. And he preached the same thing he had preached. Well, there was not anybody else to go. That is what the Lord Jesus said that day. He said, "Will you go away?" Peter looked up and said, "To whom shall we go, Lord? Thou hast the words of eternal life."[14] And they did not go. And they stayed. He is a faithful witness.

Martyn Lloyd Jones was a faithful witness. Then they began to come, and they began to come, and they began to come, and they began to come, and pretty soon they had the first balcony; and they continued to come. Then they had the second balcony, and they continued to come. And on Friday night he had eight hundred and nine hundred and a thousand people for a Bible Study at which he spoke an hour, and hour and twenty minutes. What was it? His faithful witness. The faithful witness.

The Lord Jesus said, God gave me a message to give and if nobody hears it, I still have to give it. He is a faithful witness. And this is what the Lord Jesus wants you to be, a faithful witness to Him. Now He is the first begotten of the dead, the Prince of the kings of the earth. Now notice. Unto Him that

[13] G. Campbell Morgan (1863-1945) British born Preacher and Teacher
[14] John 6:67-68

loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood. I have been hoping that as I spoke this evening, someone here would say, I am the person you are talking about. I see myself, defiled within and without. I have seen myself unclean in thought and imagination and heart. I have seen myself worthy of nothing but God's wrath and anger, because I have not only sinned against my own conscience, I have sinned against light and truth. I deserve nothing from God. God be merciful to me a sinner.

Now if you are prepared to come the way of the hypothetical Bill that I talked about, through with your sin, finished with it, to throw yourself across the Rock, Jesus Christ, this one who is the first begotten from the dead, -- if you are willing to fall on the Rock and be broken, to acknowledge that from now on Jesus Christ is to be the Lord of your life, that your crime heretofore was that you were God, playing God in your life, ruling, choosing, governing, for which you now repent, and you purpose to please Him, that you are willing that He shall govern and lead, and rule as long as you live, then I have good news for you. I can say to anyone in the name of Jesus Christ, that if you will come to Him, confessing and acknowledging all your crimes and your sins and your uncleanness, if you will come to Him, admitting what He knows, and disclosing what He has uncovered, if you will come to Him just as you are, but hating what you are, and feeling about it the way He feels, that He will wash you from your sins in His own blood. This is the Gospel. --That Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture, and that He was buried, and that He was raised again the third day according to the Scripture.

Unto Him that loved us, washed us in His Blood. Am I speaking to someone tonight that came in with a mountain of guilt, with a load of uncleanness, with an awareness that you are estranged from God, and separated from God? That if you

die as you are, you will of necessity be in Hell forever? And should it be that by some chance God does not have a Hell, that you are in such a moral state, that He would have to make one to accommodate you, because with a heart such as your heart, you could not go to Heaven. Then I submit to you that if you are prepared to come just as you are, with all your guilt and all your uncleanness, with all your stains, and defilement, just as you are, but hating what you are, and renouncing what you are, and taking sides with God against yourself, and purposing that as of now Jesus Christ shall govern and rule, and lead in your life, then I have the authority in His name to say that He will wash you from your sins in His own blood.

"What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh, precious is the flow that makes me white as snow. No other fount I know. Nothing but the blood of Jesus."[15]

In a dream Satan came to Martin Luther,[16] that leader of the Reformation. This being Reformation Sunday, it is the more appropriate. In dream and vision burdened, Satan came to Luther. You are a man of many sins. Your life is foul, vile. How dare you lead this people? How dare you claim to know the truth? How dare you preach in Jesus' name with a background such as yours, and a past such as yours? - livid with sin! And to Satan Luther said, "Yes, you are right." He said, "Would you write my sins on the wall." And in the vision, Satan inscribed the sins that he knew were there. Then in the midst of it, Luther said he interrupted him…Put sins down that Satan even had not accused him of. Things he knew were true. And finally he said, "Are there anymore?" And Satan said, "No. Anymore?

[15] Words & Music: Robert Lowry, in Gospel Music, by William Doane and Robert Lowry (New York: Biglow & Main, 1876)
[16] Martin Luther (1483-1546) German monk, former Catholic priest, who wrote the Ninety-Five Theses.

Not a one that I know of." And Luther said, "Nor do I, but is it not a list." And there the wall was covered with the record of his sins. And Satan looked at him and said, "How dare any one with such a list of sins as this dare to preach, dare to speak, dare to lead?" Ah, said Luther, "There is one thing you have forgotten. Over them all, across them all write these words: The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin. Unto Him that loved us, washed us from our sins in His own blood."

I know this, that if you will come and confess with your mouth Jesus to be Lord, and believe in your heart that God hath raised Him from the dead -- when He died for you under the load of your sin -- God for Jesus sake, will wash away your sin, and make you every wit whole. --That you can stand before Him as clean as Jesus Christ is righteous as His Son. Hear it now. And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

Perhaps I am speaking to someone here tonight. Maybe you are even a church member, but you do not have peace with God. This deep stream is casting up mire and dirt. Perhaps I am speaking to someone that knows that you have never been born of God. Or someone that knows that you are a child of God, but sin has come into your life. Oh, do your first works again; confess your sin, and know the cleansing of the Blood. Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

Let us pray.

"What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of

Jesus. Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow. No other fount I know. Nothing but the blood of Jesus."

Am I speaking to someone tonight that says, "Yes I have stain. I am a professing Christian. I know Jesus Christ, but sin has come into my life. It has separated. It has grieved. It has burdened. And I want to be clean. I want the Blood to cleanse. And I am raising my hand as an indication of my need and asking for prayer." Would you be the one to whom I am speaking, to whom this invitation is given? Thank you, I see it. God bless you. Yes, I see it. God bless you. Another, anywhere? You can put them down now. Another? I am a Christian, but sin has come into my life, and I want cleansing. I see it. God bless you. Yes. Another? Anyone? Anywhere? Anyone? Anywhere? Christian? Sin has come in; I hate it, and I want to be clean. Pray for me.

Another that I would ask is, "Yes, I know I am not saved. Oh, how I want the Blood to cleanse. How I want to have peace. I want to have the eating cancer out. Pray for me. I want to know this cleansing of the Blood you have spoken about." Would, you raise your hand? Anyone, anywhere? I am not saved. Pray for me, that I might know the cleansing of the Blood. Put your hand up and take it down. We never embarrass you here. We just help you. Anyone? Anywhere? A conscience defiled, a heart that is burdened, trying to forget, and you cannot put it away. You cannot wash it out. Oh, I would give anything if I could have my purity back as a child, spotless conscience, clean. I would like to be clean. I am not saved, but oh I want prayer. I want what you are talking about, the cleansing of the Blood. Pray for me. Would you put your hand up? We will see you, and we will remember you in prayer. Anyone?

Father, thou knowest the hearts behind the hands that have been raised, and the hearts of the unsaved that are here, that

need the cleansing of the Blood. Oh how we wish we could go and sit where they are, and for them break and bend, and confess their sin, and come to the foot of the Cross, and take cleansing and forgiveness. We that have come that know the joy and peace the Blood brings, oh what we would do Lord, anything, if we could do it for these. They must for themselves, however. And so we plead now that in this evening that there will be some who will lay hold of this…This of the faithful testimony of the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead, the one through whom grace and peace comes, Jesus Christ, who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood. Hear us, Lord. Make it real. Make it wonderfully real in some heart tonight. For Jesus sake. Amen.

In closing just one or two verses of that wonderful hymn we sing so often, and so meaningfully,

"Just As I Am Without One Plea"

But That Thy Blood Was Shed For Me,

that Thy Blood was shed for me,

and that Thou bidst me come to Thee,

Oh Lamb of God I come.[17]

And anyone who would like prayer is invited either to come to the front or wait for a moment and we will go with you into Wilson Chapel, or go directly to the rear to Wilson Chapel. We are here to help you, to meet with you, to pray with you. And so we will stand and sing in closing 107.

Shall we stand.

[17] Words Charlotte Elliott, 1789-1871; Music William B. Bradbury, 1816-1868

Christ As He Appears Today

Christ as He Appears Today. Revelation the first Chapter will give this testimony of an eyewitness. The Apostle John describes to us exactly what he saw, and we are prepared to accept his testimony. I would like to ask you what would have happened if you had been with John on the Island of Patmos on this particular Lord's Day. What would have been your response? Would it have been that you too were in the Spirit, and in the Spirit you would have seen and understood what was said? Or perhaps it would have been in your case, as it was with those that accompanied Paul. All they supposed or surmised -- that it had thundered. And thus it is in my mind this evening to ask you, "What does it mean when you hear the words, In the Spirit? I was in the Spirit." This we hope to find out. This we will see as we proceed with our study.

Now what John saw, and what we are about to consider is not a transient thing, not just something that happened and ceased. It was a transient revelation, however. He saw the Lord Jesus Christ as He is. That is why I have dared to say, The Lord Jesus Christ as He appears today. He is the unchanging, the unchangeable Christ. And what John saw then, He is now. Now remember this.

First we will get acquainted with the one who had this vision. Verses 9 and 10 of the first chapter of the Book of Revelation: "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."[18] "I John." Such a specific

[18] Revelation 1:9

designation ought to settle forever the author of the Book, and the testimony of the one we have here. This very same man who was with James mending the net the day Jesus Christ called him. The one who leaned on Jesus' bosom the night that He instituted the Lord's Supper. The one who beheld Him after His resurrection. "I John." This one who had walked with the Lord Jesus Christ for three years of earthly ministry now brings the authority of a personal witness. This is what he has seen. This is what he has experienced, and he is putting his whole life and reputation on the line for the truthfulness of what he states. "I, John who also am your brother." He is not separating himself by some vast gulf saying, I am here and you are there. "Your brother." Brother in sin, for he too was in need of salvation. Nothing could meet the need of John's heart but the cleansing Blood of an all-sufficient Savior.

"I John, your brother, under the sentence of death condemned with you. When I met Jesus Christ, I saw Him. I beheld Him. It was on that day that I heard John the Baptist say, 'Behold the Lamb of God.' And I am your brother now through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, born into the same family, partaker of the same grace, washed in the same precious Blood." Whatever age, whatever period down across the centuries this ever will be read, and everyone to whom in which it has been read, John has identified himself with us as one of the heirs of salvation, and one who is dedicated to serving the Lord Jesus and thereby glorifying Him. "Your brother."

Then notice. He doesn't stop there. But, "Your companion in tribulation."[19] "Your companion in tribulation." John had been tested. He had been persecuted. The record tells us. Many of

[19] Revelation 1:9

you have *Fox's Book of Martyrs*[20]. Perhaps I had better ask how many of you read it, if you have it? So many books, you know, grace our shelves and disgrace our minds because we fail to appropriate them. Have you read *Fox's Book of Martyrs*? Oh I would urge you to do it real soon. And let something of this testimony of these who loved not their lives unto death lay hold upon you. "I John, your brother and your companion in tribulation." I have mentioned it several times recently how John had been sentenced to die and spared and delivered. And then he said "I was, for the testimony of Jesus Christ, exiled to the Island of Patmos."

Reading of this just this week, I have been reminded that Patmos had mines, lead mines. And the exiled often were forced to work as slave laborers, mining lead. We have no evidence that John was engaged in such servitude. But by the same token, we have no proof that he was not. And so if you wish, you can imagine John the elderly one who worked with the Lord and toiled at drawing fish from the Sea of Galilee now is there taking his place in the morning with the other slaves, exiled to the Island of Patmos. These were noble men often, tribunes, senators, wealthy men that had been put in this place, thus confined and protected, sort of a Devil's Island to the Roman Empire. And John is there. And he says "your companion in tribulation." I know what it is to suffer for the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Your companion in the Kingdom." You see, when Jesus Christ takes us, He not only receives us in terms of forgiveness for a heavenly kingdom, but right then and there He translates us from the kingdom of this world into His own Kingdom. The Kingdom of God is in you. In this sense, that when Jesus Christ

[20] John Fox (or Foxe) was born at Boston, in Lincolnshire, in 1517 and he meekly resigned his soul to Christ, on the eighteenth of April, 1587

owns you and possesses you, you are the extra-territorial rights of the sovereign Son of God. And in you He has a place where His banner flies, where He rules. The Kingdom of God is in you. The Kingdom of God is not in meat and drink, but it is in righteousness and in peace, and in the joy of the Holy Ghost.[21] He says, "Your companion in the Kingdom."

Then, "your companion in the patience of Jesus Christ." Generally speaking, when the word patience is linked with the name of Christ, it is that patient waiting for Him to return. John was with that company on the Mount of Olives that day when our Lord was caught up by a cloud. John heard the angel say. "This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go."[22] And so he says, I am a companion in the upward look, a companion in the anticipation that the Son of God is going to come, cleaving the clouds to gather to Him His own. I am a companion in the patience of Jesus Christ. So this gives us some little insight into the man himself.

But then we ought to consider the source of his certainty about the vision. I have mentioned in the past John of Ruysbroeck[23], this man. And if you want a book that will really bless your heart, get his *Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage*. I am sure the bookstore will get it for you. It is hard to read, but oh it is so lovely if you can take the time to do it. But John is telling us now he had a vision. Do you believe in visions? Well it depends on who it is that has it. There are some people, they came to me and said they had a vision, all I would say is, "Well." But somebody else, it is another matter. It depends on the man. It depends on the person. It depends on how they live and walk. Old Uncle Bud Robinson said, "I don't care how high you jump when you are happy. Just so you walk straight when

[21] Romans 14:17
[22] Acts 1:11
[23] Blessed John of Ruysbroeck (1293-1381)

you come down." And the vision -- this is important. Doesn't make any difference --- sure I believe in visions. I believe in -- believe the same Jesus is able the same way to speak as He has in the past. But I tell you, I want to know the character and the conduct and the attitude of the person who has it. "I John." He has walked steadfastly, all these decades. 95 A.D. - possibly 98 A.D. The Lord Jesus left, went back to Heaven, in 30 A.D. That means that John has been walking alone for 65, 68 years. Now when this man has a vision, you had better pay attention. Better pay attention. When he speaks, it is a different matter. Not just some enthusiast, but this is someone that knows the Lord.

So in the 10th verse, he describes how it came about. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day."[24] Waiting, worshipping, in the Spirit. What does this mean, in the Spirit? Well it means not necessarily that he was in a state of ecstasy, but he was walking in the conscious fullness of the Spirit. He was aware of the Spirit's presence. And he was withdrawn. He recollected. I love the way the Quaker writers and others spoke of recollection, recollecting. You know we get so scattered. Our minds, our attitudes, our enthusiasms, our zeal, all get outside. And the ancients talk about being recollected, calling in. Calling in your thoughts, calling in your emotions, and calling in your fears; collecting them. And then the inner sanctuary, the secret of the Lord is in the sanctuary. And you are the Temple of God, and the place that God speaks is here in the heart, in the inner man. When he says, "I was in the Spirit," I believe that he was just quietly there, not in some ecstasy in which he was physically gyrated. That is not it. Withdrawn, and quiet, just happily, humbly, and sweetly in fellowship with the Lord. And he said, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day." He remembered this, the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, waiting. Perhaps it

[24] Revelation 1:10

could have been he was in chains. Perhaps it could have been he was mining, for there would certainly be no regard for the Lord's Day in a Roman mine. But is it not true that chains do not a prison make? And John could be in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.

He said, "I heard a voice as of a great trumpet." I heard a voice. You know, he was not a stranger to this voice. He had heard that same voice before. For he could recall the day that he had seen one standing on the shore of Galilee. The boat was in against the shore, and tied to the little wharf. He was out there sitting, weaving and mending the nets. And he hears a voice, "John, come. Follow Me." And he heard a voice, but he recognized the voice. For he tells us who spoke. He tells us that it was the voice of the one who said, "I am the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega."[25] This is the voice of Christ. The voice that John would recognize. But notice something. He says, "…the voice was behind me." This gives us a little insight into John's character. The voice was behind me.

I think we are to see this in the manner in which I am about to present it, have presented it. First it was called to my attention, your attention, by Brother Bakht Singh[26] when he was here two years ago this month…perhaps this very same night. You recall how it was when he told us that John was looking backward to the good old days. In the Spirit meditating on the days as he walked with Christ, and the days of the early Church when he had been with the other Apostles. Oh my, how prone we are to this. How often all of us do it. To make a distinction between the sweetness of the memories of yesterday, and the glorious privileges of today, and the victories of tomorrow requires wisdom indeed. How is it that we can take all the value and the

[25] Revelation 22:13
[26] Bro. Bakht Singh (1903 - 2000)

meaning and the sweetness from the past, and yet turn that all to good account for the present, and use the past and the present as the resources for the future?

Unfortunately, too often people sit in the present, lose all interest in it in a sense -- and oh this is an academic disease in America. I think you could almost call it Americanitis -- this inflammation of the human spirit that loses the meaning of the present. Child goes to high school, and he works so hard to graduate with honors so that he can go into college, so that he can work so hard to graduate with honors, so that he can go into graduate school, so that he can graduate with honors, so that he can get a job, and get a promotion. And all of his life he is like somebody running uphill inside of a squirrel cage. He's just going. And nothing gives any pleasure. The high school diploma did not give any pleasure because the college diploma loomed ahead. And the college diploma did not give any real pleasure because there had to be graduate work before they could go on perhaps. And that did not give any real pleasure because now he had to put his training to work in order to secure a standing in his field. And so it is a constant climbing. Then of course the whole of life is wished away in this anticipation.

I have suffered from it from my earliest day. I think we that were the children of the Depression, who saw everything around us disintegrate, and were not old enough to meet it as adults, and just were young enough to feel the terror of it, have particularly strong emotional problems in this regard. We remember how jobs disappeared, and poverty and seeing strong men stand in line to get a box full of grape fruit and some butter and carry it home. It was a terrifying experience. And to have it happen to your own family as it did to many my age, when you look back on it as youngsters then. And so

constantly pushing, constantly climbing to keep ahead of this thing.

This is a tragic thing because this is the day the Lord has made. We are to rejoice in it. Now. This is life. Right now. We are always getting ready to live, always. We are going to be supremely and sublimely happy in some beautiful tomorrow. Of course when tomorrow gets here, this is not quite the day. It has got to be pushed further ahead. In all our lives, we are pushing this day when we are going to take time to be friends, and take time to pray, and take time to live life to the full. Always pushing it ahead. Oh, it is a disease.

But there is another disease almost as bad, and that's the disease of looking back to some yesterday. Time has made all the unpleasant parts of it disappear and you were so happy to get out of it when you were there, and now that you are out of it, it looks so beautiful, and you just think. Oh this was the…this was it.

Now this is what John is suffering from. He is an old man. It often comes with age. I am beginning to find out that we have sort of lived our life, and -- What can these youngsters do coming up? How are they going to be able to handle the problems we faced? Things are just going to get worse and worse you know. And John is sitting there in exile, thinking of those churches, and those boys that he had to spank and had to discipline, and now they are the pastors of the churches in Asia Minor, and they are the ones carrying responsibility, and leadership. And…he is looking backward. And he hears a voice behind him. He is looking back toward the good old days. Oh I am mad at the good old days. They were not good enough for the people that were in them. They were still looking at the good old days. They did not even know they were good. Do you know that these are the good old days for our great

grandchildren? Honestly. These are the good old days for them. And they were not good enough for them, and now we look back and say, Oh wasn't it wonderful? Wasn't it? This is what John was doing. I believe in spite of all that he has, and all, he is looking backward. And he hears a voice, but he hears a voice behind him.

You know, you may find that beauty is in the past, but the Lord has a more wonderful future than the past has ever been. I absolutely refuse to believe that for the child of God that walks in obedience to his Heavenly Father that the best is behind us. I cannot believe it. Now if you go into sin and disobedience and rebellion against God, believe me the best is behind you because there is going to be severe chastening in the future. But if you love God, and your heart is abandoned to Him, and your purpose is to please Him, the blessedness is ahead. It is in the future. The future is just as glorious as God is great. It is just as bright as He is able. Now when I say future, I am saying the future not in terms of material terms. It may mean that all of us go into concentration camps or persecution. I am not talking about sensual comfort when I am talking about blessedness. I am talking about the only thing that counts to a Christian, and that is the Glory of Jesus Christ. I refuse to believe that Jesus Christ got all the glory He wants yesterday. I think that He is waiting for you and for me today to meet Him on His terms, and bow before Him, and surrender to Him, and that He will do something for us and our children that will bring that glory to Him that He yearns for.

And John heard a voice behind him. But we find in verse 12 that he said, "I turned to see the voice that spake with me."[27] He heard the voice, and he is overwhelmed by it. And he listens. What is it that we hear Him say? What is this here? "I

[27] Revelation 1:12

heard a voice behind me saying I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last."[28] Who is this one? He is the one who says: "Before me there was nothing, and after me there will be nothing. All things are by me. All things consist in my power. I am the creator and the sustainer of the universe. I am the first and the last, the Alpha and the Omega." God is speaking. This is how He chooses to identify Himself. And God says to John, I am using you as the vehicle of blessing to the churches for which you are concerned. I believe that every one of us that is in the will of God and filled with the Spirit of God and walks in obedience to the Word of God will be to the blessing of the Church. The Church is God's instrumentality. The Church is God's method. The Church is God's program. And now John is on the Island of Patmos, alone with the Lord, and the Lord says to him, John I am using you to bless the Church.

And everything that God does through us will be for the edification, the exhortation and the comfort of the Church. I love thy Church, O Lord. Do you love the Church? -- So much that you cannot harm it. You cannot hurt it. You cannot…But you can only minister in longing prayer for it. Do you love the Church? ....The Body of Jesus Christ. If you do, it is going to make you exceedingly sensitive. John loved the Church. And if you read over here in his little letters, the 2nd Epistle, verse 1, "The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth[29]... The elder unto the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth."[30] How great is his concern for the Church. How deeply does this Apostle of love minister to the Church. And now we find the Lord saying to him, "What thou seest, write in a Book. And send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia."[31] I want you to be the vehicle of blessing. I want you

[28] Revelation 1:11
[29] 2 John 1:1
[30] 3 John 1:1
[31] Revelation 1:11

to receive this message from me, and pass it on to them, and thus they are to receive it as from me through you, and find it binding upon them. The message is from Christ. This one who is the first and the last. This one who has supreme authority. He is the one that is speaking, but He is speaking through the Apostle. And He is speaking in such a way as to bring blessing.

Now we have considered the one who saw the vision and the ones for whom the vision was intended. Now just let us give ourselves to the one that was seen in the vision. Verses 12 - 19; "I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks."[32] The first thing John saw was a representation of the Church under the emblem of the seven candlesticks. The Church I say, the Church is represented by the candlesticks because the light of the candlestick is not from the candlestick. It is from another source. It is simply sustained by the candlestick, and revealed by the candlestick. And the Church has no power in itself. All the light that comes through the Church is from the presence of Christ. And thus the candlestick becomes the very effective and appropriate representation of the Church. The Church is represented as holding forth that light which is found in the person of the Son of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is represented as confining the revelation of Himself to His Church. I want you to get this point.

There are people who talk against the Church, and who criticize it. They should criticize everything that hurts it and injures it, but they should always do it in love. You know, maybe when your child has a mosquito on his forehead you want to brush it off, but friend don't take a hammer to do it. Do not kill a mosquito with a baseball bat. You will succeed in killing the mosquito, but your baby may be pointed headed all

[32] Revelation 1:12

his life, and injured, and twisted and warped. And this is what, I think, so often happens when people come and they criticize the Church. And they bruise it, and they hurt it, and they injure it. No. No. No, No. You cannot do that and not get into trouble with Jesus Christ. He loves His Church. He loves His Church. There may be the necessity from time to time to take a stand against that which is wrong. We are to stand for the truth. We are not to be swept about by every wind of doctrine, by cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive, but speaking the truth in love. Always to speak the truth in love. And this is where the Lord Jesus shows Himself. He shows Himself through the Church.

Now the candlesticks were made of gold. This reveals to us the purity of the Church. It is to be pure. If you are going to show forth His light, and we are to be the revealers of His character, there must be purity. And I submit to you that in a sense the Church is no more pure than you are if you are a part of it. Because you are part of the candlestick. And it is therefore imperative that everyone that has been bound together by the Spirit of God in any church, and you are here tonight though you may never have been here before, but if you are here in Christ for this gathering, for this time, you constitute part of a unique group. We will never be together again the same way we are now. We are here as a company of people, and I would believe supernaturally sovereignly banded together. Let it be understood that this Church of which we are a part now is no more pure than you are. If you have unconfessed, unforsaken, unforgiven sin in your life, then the gold is filled with dross to the degree to which you are filled with sin. Therefore we are to have consciences void of offense toward God and toward man, because we are part of the Church, the candlestick that reveals the Glory of Christ. The gold had to be put on the fire and it had to be melted. Then the dross would rise to the surface, be scraped and drawn away. And then it was pounded, shaped

and molded in order for it to be a candlestick. The gold of course also speaks to us of the fact that the Church is without price. He purchased it with His precious blood,[33] and again I come back to you and say that all of God's method is the Church, all of God's program is the Church.

Now how do I use it? Do I use it in the sense of the society such as the Christian and Missionary Alliance? No. Do I use it in the sense of the Methodist Church, a great denomination? No. What do I use? How am I thinking when I use the word Church, so we understand each other? I am thinking of that local company of believers that ought to be banded together by the Holy Ghost, one mind, one heart, and one Spirit…this local group of believers is the Church of which we speak. There was a Church at Ephesus, and Smyrna, and Pergamos. Didn't say the churches in Ephesus, because you know this, that if you wish to speak of New York City every member of the Body of Christ in New York City is a member of every other member of the Body of Christ. Do you understand that? Let me repeat that. Everyone in central, midtown Manhattan that is a member of the Body of Christ is a member of every other member of the Body of Christ in this same geographical area.

Now unfortunately the Body of Christ has been divided into a myriad of fragments and in a sense the Lord does not have a Church in New York. If we could see what God sees we would have to view that in any geographical area every member of the Body of Christ is a member of every other member. And in a sense our fellowship ought to be on that level, on the geographical level. I am not optimistic enough to believe that it will come, by any engineering or programing or machinations of men. I do not expect it to come that way. But I refuse to change my thinking because it is scriptural that in any

[33] 1 Peter 1:19

geographical area every Christian is a member of every other Christian. Now we are split four ways from Sunday -- 312 Protestant denominations, and probably all of them have their representation in Manhattan. But at Ephesus there was a Church. At Pergamos, there was a Church. The Church at Thyatira. Not churches. The Church. Now there may have been many groups, but they met on a geographical area, on the basis of their proximity to each other. One day perhaps the Lord will bring it back that way. I hope so. I trust so. But in the meanwhile, if we cannot deal with the ideal, if we cannot have that which is absolute in its scriptural perfection, then let us understand this, that wherever you meet a Christian, whether he wears your brand name or not, he is in Christ. He is part of you. You are members of the same body. And for this reason, I caution you against speaking ill of bodies, of any groups where God may have some of His children.

I hate to find people speaking ill of the society of which I am a part, the Christian and Missionary Alliance. Occasionally I find people speak in great derision and great contempt of us. I do not think we deserve it. I do not think it is fair. I do not think it is honoring to the Lord. It grieves the Holy Spirit. But you know something. I think He is equally grieved when we speak in derogatory manner of other groups as such. I do not think we should do that. I think we ought to recognize that God's poor, poor sheep have been gathered in a myriad of places and scattered.[34] But they are still His sheep, His Body; isn't as He wants it... Someday, let us believe and trust He will bring it together. But right now, let us join one to another by the Holy Ghost, so live in abandonment to Jesus Christ, so walk in the fullness of the Spirit, so live manifesting the fruit of the Spirit, that Jesus Christ can have in us a vehicle to manifest Himself as He wishes here.

[34] Ezekiel 34:6

This is what we find him saying now. Christ was in the midst of the candlesticks. He is revealed through the Church. That is why the satanic effort has always been directed toward the Church. The enemy has bruised it. Satan has tried to infiltrate it, to corrupt it, to hurt it, to injure it, and has found every possible means that he could to do it. But nevertheless we know that He has said, "I will build my Church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it."[35] And when we stand on the victory of Calvary, and lock the gates to the enemy, then at least for the working out of His purpose locally here, He can do that. It is in the Church that Jesus Christ is manifested. I would rather be speaking to a company of people here or in any other city in one sense, one final sense, than to speak to five thousand people if they did not represent a Church. That is why I am never troubled about the size of the congregation … If that congregation consists of responsible people that are joined to each other in testimony.

Let me explain why. You get ten thousand curious, ten thousand seeking entertainment, ten thousand that represent every kind of group, and you communicate to them. They are not capable of taking that truth and implementing it and putting it into a testimony, bringing it to life. But if we can get a group of elders and deacons, a Church, and get that Church to lay hold of truth and get that Church to walk in truth, then through that Church Jesus Christ can have custodians of truth that He can bless with it. And I would rather get a group of ten people that are a Church, part of it, leaders of it, and talk to them than a hundred people that are from ten churches and have no particular interest in the custody of truth.

Now of course, this involves something else. You get a church, and they do not take the responsibility of truth then you might

[35] Matthew 16:18

as well be speaking to the fencepost. But if you can have a church of men and women who love Jesus Christ that are joined together by the Spirit of God…And give to them the revelation of God…This is what John is doing. Send the message to the Church. Send it to the Church. I am going to use them. I am going to bless them. Everything that He does, He does for the Church. Everything He does, He does through the Church. It is His unit of operation. When the Church becomes unblessable, when it comes to the place that the Lord has to wash His hands of it, He casts it out like salt that has lost its savor, and be trodden under foot of men. And then He just starts over again. But you can absolutely predict what Jesus Christ is going to do until He comes again. The unit He is going to work with is the Church.

Should it be that this Church that has such a remarkable history, and has been so blessed of God should in some unthinkable impossible day come to the place where they close their heart to the will of God; the only thing it means is that Jesus Christ is going to do it over again, somewhere else. That is all. But He has set the Church as the unit. That is why I do not like men that, for instance, take the message of healing and make and exploit it around their ministry. Now I believe that Jesus Christ is Healer. And that He heals. But I believe the place for this truth is in the Church, not in some man using it to exploit and develop and build his own personal ministry. I believe it is in the Church.

I believe the unit of evangelism is the Church. I believe the place of comfort -- I actually would go so far as to say that I believe that the unit of relief for the poor is the Church. And care for the young is the Church. I think all of these other agencies that have been raised up of necessity -- the Gideons, and the Christian Business Men, and the YMCA, and all the long list of auxiliary agencies -- exist because of the failure of

the Church. That the unit God has ordained, and the unit He employs is the Church. I am Church centered in thinking, because it is the unit that God has established. There are only two agencies, two units, two organizations that God has ever started and that He has blessed. The first is the home. He started that. And the second is the Church. And we have started a myriad of other agencies and groups and societies and organizations. And they all represent the failure of the home to be what He intended it to be, and the failure of the Church to be what He intended it to be. Well, let us keep this here. This is what He is showing.

Now, whatever the vision is, it is going to have its purpose for blessing to the Church. Take this message to them. Carry this word to them. Write it, put it in a book, and send it to them. What was it that he was to write? Write what you see. And what did he see? He saw one in the midst of the candlesticks like unto the Son of Man; Jesus Christ was seen. And He wants the churches to know that the place of His revelation is there in the Church. And He wants the churches to know the kind of a person He is. And so the first thing John saw was that the Son of Man was clothed with a garment down to the foot.[36] Here was the robe of a prince. Here were the robes of majesty. The robes of splendor. The robes of authority. And He stands before John now with this insignia of all of the authority in Heaven and earth that has been committed unto Him. I saw Him with a robe down to His feet.

It speaks also of the robe that He wore as our High Priest, for He is there with the priestly garment. Righteousness and honor, mercy and truth robed Him. And He is to be seen now as this one that is there robed down to the feet. Remember how they stripped Him of His garments, and left Him in shameful

[36] Revelation 1:13

nakedness, and buffeted Him, and beat Him and bruised Him, and in humility they scourged Him, and then took Him to the Cross, that most ignominious and shameful of deaths. And to John said, "You tell the Church that you saw me in a robe." A robe. Not one of Pilate's cast off robes. Not something that has been patched together. But that you see me in a robe of majesty.

Then He said, "You tell them that you saw me girt about with a golden breastplate." A golden girdle. This belonged to the High Priest. It speaks to us of Aaron who had the breastplate on which were inscribed the names of the twelve tribes.[37] And it tells us that Jesus Christ is there with a golden girdle, a golden breastplate, and He is ready for His work as redeemer, and mediator. You tell them at Tyre and at Pergamos and at Philadelphia that when you saw me, I not only had on a robe of majesty, but I had on the golden breastplate, and I have their names over my heart. Remember the song we sing, "My name is written on His hands." Well your name is written on the golden breastplate. And He is there as your redeemer presenting His blood, as your mediator, as your advocate. And so said Christ to John, "Tell them that I am still continuing as their High Priest, representing them. That I have an unchangeable priesthood, and their names are over my heart."

Then notice His head and His hairs were white like wool.[38] "White like wool." White hair speaks of age. Not of senility, not of decay of power in this case. But He is the Ancient of the everlasting days, the eternal Son. Remember what His name shall be called? "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father."[39] And here He is, the Alpha -- the Beginning. The Ancient of days.

[37] Exodus 28:15-21
[38] Revelation 1:14
[39] Isaiah 9:6

The eternal Son. Without beginning, without end. Tell them that you saw me thus with my hair white.

And tell them also. Tell that church, those churches also, that the white hair was the crown of my glory. For remember that He loved His people with an everlasting love. In the fullness of time He had become flesh and dwelt among them. He died for them. His beard had been plucked from His face. His hair had been pulled. He had been bruised, indescribably bruised. But now, with a robe of majesty, and a breastplate of redemption, and the Crown of Glory, He is to be seen. And His eyes were as a flame of fire, piercing, penetrating into the very hearts of men. What is He saying? Tell the Church at Philadelphia that they are not deceiving me. I know them. I know all about them. In a little while, those eyes that are as the flame of fire are going to describe just what He saw in Ephesus. Just what He saw in Tyre. Tell them how my eyes were. Nothing was hidden, nothing was covered, and nothing was shielded. I saw into the deepest intents of their heart. I saw everything that they did, and why they did it. Eyes as a flame of fire. Tell them that those eyes are going to scatter terror among the adversaries. Everyone that opposes me…Everyone that hinders me will find that these eyes pierce through to the deepest secret hiding places of the human spirit.

His feet were like unto burning brass.[40] Strong. Steadfast. Supporting His eternal purpose. No vacillating. No wavering. Feet of brass. "The foundation of God standeth sure having this seal. The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."[41] You can bring in the unsaved into a local church, but the feet of the Son of God are the feet of brass. You cannot disturb it. Oh this

[40] Revelation 1:15
[41] 2 Timothy 2:19

particular group will go to oblivion, go into death, will have Ichabod written over them, but His purpose stands sure. Tell them this. Tell them that they need not fear. Tell them that my feet were like burning brass, polished, firm. Nothing is going to move them. Tell them also that these are the very feet that are going to subdue my enemies, that are going to tread them to powder, tread out the winepress, bring the judgment that is so justly deserved.

Then John said, "I heard that His voice was as the sound of many waters." Here said Jesus Christ, I want you to write and tell them that my Word is going to go forth. And Nero is not going to stop it. And Marcus Aurelius won't stop it. My Word is like the flow of waters. It is going to be heard over all the din of men. It is going to go. And I rejoice tonight that - to realize that His voice is as the voice of many waters. And someone has said, "Well of course we know that in China the testimony of Jesus Christ has been extinguished." I do not believe it for a moment, not a moment. Not until you can change Jesus Christ can you stop the going forth of His voice. The Church as it was known before the bamboo curtain closed certainly has disappeared. But I do not for one moment dare to believe that the voice of the Son of God, which is as the voice of many waters, has ceased flowing in China. I do not know how it flows. I do not know where it flows. But I believe that flow cannot be stopped, for He said, "The gates of Hell shall not prevail against it."[42] They tried to stop it in Russia. But it failed, signally failed. For the history of Russia for these years since the conquest by the Communists has been the history of the triumph of the Church in the spite of most severe persecution. I think of those young people there in Russia that had come to them, smuggled in, a Bible in the Russian language. And tenderly took the threads away and lest anything should

[42] Matthew 16:18

happen gave to each one a page, a double page, not as you would expect--four in a row. No. It would be from one Book, and from another Book, just as it came apart. And then they would gently put it away, and carefully keep it so that it would not be crushed and the print obliterated, and they then would memorize it, and feed on it. And then they would exchange. Try to get as near as they could to where theirs had been. But fed on the Word. No. No. You cannot stop Him whose voice is as the voice of many waters. There is a river flowing that nothing can dam, nothing can stop. The message of His Word is a great stream of salvation and is going to flow. And I believe it is flowing, and He is making the wrath of men to praise Him. We do not see it. That is all right. I am sure it is flowing.

Then He had in His right hand seven stars.[43] I believe that these seven stars speak of faithful servants. One for each church. Stars that were there. Men that would speak as John would speak, and others. How strange it is that Elijah said, "I, only I remain. I am the only one left." God has faithful men tonight, wherever you turn. Wherever you go you find those that are standing on the testimony of Jesus Christ. And I believe that when He writes to the Church and says, "You tell them that you saw seven stars in my hand," He is saying that I have witnesses that have stood for me in spite of all the inducements and all of the blandishments and the siren voice that would woo them away. They still are standing for me. And I believe this is true today, as it was then.

Out of His mouth went a two-edged sword. Again, the picture of the Word. First the Word that wounds, that brings conviction, that causes us to see our sin. Then, having slain, brings life and heals. It strikes at sin, and condemns the sinner,

[43] Revelation 1:16

and then to the pardoned, repentant sinner it brings the message of forgiveness and eternal life. Two-edged sword.

His countenance was as the shining of the sun. Too bright. Too pure. Too strong for mortal eyes. Here is the Son of God in His glory. And what did John do, and what must you do at seeing this vision? Verse 17 describes it. "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." This is not the first time this has happened. If you will go back to Joshua, you discover that the day that Joshua saw the Captain of the Host of the Lord, he fell at His feet as dead.[44] You come again, and you will find that Daniel saw the revelation of Jesus Christ and he fell at His feet as dead.[45] Isaiah saw the Lord, high, and lifted up and fell at His feet as dead.[46] This is what men do when they see Jesus Christ. This is what you have done, if you have seen Him thus. Dying to yourself, and your own will, and your own plans, and your own program, and your own whims, and your own fancy, you have come to Him this way. Have you? Oh I trust you have. Have you come seeing yourself under the sentence of death, getting some glimpse of His holiness, and in the light of what He is, seeing yourself. Overpowered by the revelation of Christ's glory, so that you're overpowered by the revelation of your own unworthiness.

I was talking just the other day with a group about the dealings of God through John Wesley.[47] John Wesley preached in Bristol Common to twenty thousand people. Such anointing of the Spirit of God was upon him, such power in the service as he spoke for three hours that day concerning the majesty of Christ, that when the crowd had departed there were said to be over

[44] Joshua 5:14
[45] Daniel 8:17
[46] Isaiah 6:1-5
[47] John Wesley (1703-1791) Anglican cleric, Christian theologian, and founder the Methodist movement

eighteen hundred people that were lying on the ground unconscious. The revelation of the majesty of Jesus Christ had caused them to fall on their faces as though they were dead.

The same phenomena accompanied the preaching of John Wesley Redfield[48] in New Haven, Connecticut, in the Yale Bowl. There, the Bowl then holding about thirty thousand people, speaking to a capacity crowd, when the crowd had dispersed and had left, there were several hundred, someone said as many as 900 people lying there on the tiers at the bowl of the stadium unconscious, because of the overwhelming revelation of the glory of Jesus Christ.

Have you ever seen Him in His glory? Have you ever seen Him in His splendor? Seen Him in His majesty? Have you seen Him so that you have fallen on your face before Him? I believe a lot of problems in a lot of lives would be solved by a revelation of Jesus Christ in His glory. Have you seen Him thus? Have you seen Him, like Peter did, "Depart from me for I am a wicked man, a sinful man."[49] John saw Him, and fell on his face as dead; this man who had leaned on His bosom. This man who I believe was the one who fled leaving his coat in the hands of the soldier on the night Christ was taken. This man that saw Him after the resurrection. When he sees him today, falls on his face as dead.

I think John remembered Jesus Christ in His humility, Jesus Christ in His work, in His walk. I believe, my dear friend, that you and I make the mistake of seeing the Son of God, the meek and lowly traveler of Galilee. And we get too pally, and too familiar with Him, as He is presented in His humiliation. And we fail to see Him as He is, high and lifted up. I believe there is a high call of the Spirit of God for you to see Jesus Christ, not as

[48] John Wesley Redfield (1810 - 1863) Helped start the Free Methodist Church
[49] Luke 5:8

He was, but as He is…And to fall on your face before Him. He is no longer the meek and lowly Jesus. He is King of kings, Lord of lords. There is only one place that anyone who professes to loves Christ can ever properly stay, and that is on his face at His feet. This is Jesus now. This is how He is today.

His countenance as the sun shining. Too bright. Too pure. Too strong for mortal eyes to see. And when in that day He is seated upon the throne, and men are forced to come before Him, they will call for the rocks and the mountains to cover them and hide them from the face of the wrath of the Lamb. This is the Jesus of today. This is how He is today.

And then Christ touched Him. I do not believe that Jesus Christ has a touch for anybody until they are on their faces before Him. You want a touch from God. There is one place to be sure to get it. You get on your face before Him. He will touch you. You break before Him. He will touch you. You bend before Him. He will touch you. This is where He has the touch. No other place. And He touched him and He gently spake for him. And the hand that touched him was the nail pierced hand. And He said to John, "Fear not."[50] But you know the only one that should not fear the Son of God is the one who fears Him, to the place where he falls on his face before Him, abandoning all sin, all uncleanness, acknowledging what he is. That one who fears Him is the only one who need not fear Him. It sounds like a contradiction, but the one who has no fear of the exalted Son Of God is the one, who ought to fear Him, and the one who fears Him because of who He is and all of His worthiness is the one who will hear Him say, "Fear not."

For those hands were nailed to the Cross. And that side was pierced by a spear. I was dead, said He. I was dead, and am

[50] Revelation 1:17

alive for ever more. I was dead, speaks of His suffering for our salvation. The redemption that He purchased with His precious blood. I was dead, but I am alive. His resurrection. And His power. And I have the keys of death and Hell. The only one in this universe that can open the door to Heaven and lock the door to Hell is Jesus Christ. Here He is the Son of God as He appears today.

Oh, if somehow these words could serve by His anointing and His power to bring you to His feet, broken, bowed and bent. Then together we would hear Him say, "Fear not. I am the First and the Last. I was dead, but am alive forevermore." There is cleansing, there is pardon, there is forgiveness, there is life. Have you seen the Son of God as He is today? Not as He was on the Cross, but as He is on the Throne.

Let us bow before Him in a moment of disciplined silence, trying to remember what you have heard, and read, asking God to open the eyes of your heart to see Him. Telling Him that you are prepared to fall at His feet, that you want to see Him as He is, and see yourself as you are, and learn to fear sin, and love holiness and righteousness. That you want to feel His touch, His forgiveness, His cleansing, His pardon.

Oh, thou Son of God, thou who art alive forevermore, open the eyes of our hearts, so blinded by the world that still holds thy name in derision. Grant Lord, that we as a people shall see thee high and lifted up. We shall see thee as thou art. Lord, our eyes have too long beheld thee on the crucifix. Thou art not there. Beheld thee walking, teaching in the paths, plains of Galilee. Thou art not there. Grant that we may see thee as thou art now, exalted, enthroned, glorified, and that like John of old, we shall bow before thee, hating sin and uncleanness, and offer to thee the only thing that can ever be a token of our love, our ransomed personalities as a living sacrifice.

With our heads bowed and our eyes closed this invitation. You are here tonight unsaved. You have come in for some reason, and you know that you are without Christ and without hope, without God. And you want Jesus Christ. You have heard that He died for sinners and rose again. He was dead, but He is alive forevermore. And you want this same Jesus to wash away your sin and make you every whit whole. And tonight you are opening your heart to Him and inviting Him to become your Savior and your Lord, and you would like to seal it and be remembered in prayer. Would you raise your hand right now, wherever you are, saying, "Pray for me." I am taking Jesus Christ as my Lord and my Savior tonight. Would you put your hand up? Take it down again. Anyone? Perhaps there is someone who would say. Pray for me. I know I ought to. I am not to the place yet where I am willing, but I want prayer. Pray for me. I need prayer. God bless you. Yes. I see it. Anyone else?

We pray, our Father, for the one whose hand has been lifted, and for the heart behind it. And we ask that the Holy Spirit will not cease in loving labor until this one has come to bow at the feet of Jesus Christ. Might it be that even tonight while we wait, solemn before thee, the revelation of thy Son that there shall be in this heart a glad willingness to say, "Yes, I do not give over. I do take Jesus Christ to be Lord and Savior. I renounce my right to rule and declare that henceforth He shall be my redeemer and my Lord. I do open my heart's door to thee, Lord Jesus. Come in."

Might it be just now as we pray. We do release him unto thee Lord. We stand against the enemy in every holding, blinding effort. Oh God, set him free. Set this person free. Let liberty come. Deliverance come. Joy and peace come. Through Jesus Christ. We pray for everyone else Lord, that ought to have made known their need. We pray our Father, for everyone who is here that names the name of Christ. Might it be like John, we

shall fall on our faces before the Son of God. Now Lord, we go. May we go quietly, prayerfully, solemnly. Go to our homes to think, to meditate, to pray, to read the Scripture. Oh God, break in upon us. Do something wonderful to glorify the Son, to magnify Him. All we ask of thee, the only thing we want of thee for this church, is that He, the Son of Man, may be seen in the midst of the candlestick, and may get the glory that is His due. And so to that end, seal this service. Amen.

Let us stand for the benediction. To the one whose hand has been raised and to those who might wish to be given the privilege of a time alone in conversation and prayer, I invite you to remain behind or go into Wilson Chapel so that we can talk together.

Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God the Father, the Communion and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost be and abide with us each one now until we meet again. Amen.

Seven Stars and Seven Candlesticks

Now would you turn, please, to Revelation, the 1st and 2nd chapters. -- Seven Stars, Seven Candlesticks. And I read in order that we may have the context, beginning with the 12th verse. John, the Revelator, is sharing with us what he has seen, and heard, and experienced. So, beginning then with the 12th verse, let me conclude with the 1st verse of the 2nd Chapter:

"And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead."

"And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of Hell and of death. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches. Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, Who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks."

This picture of our Lord Jesus Christ is in striking contrast to the picture that we have presented in the Gospels. There we find Him weeping at the tomb of Lazarus. We find Him silent in the presence of Pilate. We find Him bowing His back to the Cross and to the scourge. We see Him in the garden after His resurrection, unknown, unrecognized even by Mary who thought that He was the gardener. Questioned by His disciples as they walked with Him on the road to Emmaus.

Now the picture that we have given to us here of the Lord Jesus Christ is, I say, in striking contrast. Some might say, and they have, that this is not an accurate revelation, but it is. For in the Gospels, you have Christ as He was last seen by men, before He had taken His place at the right hand of the Father. And in Revelation you have the unveiling of Christ as He is now, at the right hand of the Father, with all authority in Heaven and earth in His hands.

And you wonder what kind of an appearance the Lord Jesus at the right hand of the Father has. This is it. When you think of the Son of God, you do wrong if you think of Him as the meek and lowly Jesus there. Everyone who prays visualizes. You have to. When you pray for the sick, if you pray in faith you visualize that person well. If you pray for a need, you visualize the need supplied. If you pray for the change of character, you visualize the person as he will be, when his character has been changed. And when you pray to the Lord, somehow, somewhere, there is a mental picture of the one to whom you are speaking. How do you see in mind's eye the one to whom you are praying? John has given us the picture of this one, seated upon the throne, filled with glory, standing in celestial splendor, before whose feet he fell as dead. But oh how tender, how loving…John who leaned on His chest…John who walked with Him…The beloved Apostle and disciple…hears this same Jesus speaking, “Fear not.”

And yet you ought to fear and not fear. Another of the paradoxes. You ought to serve God with godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire. You ought to be so afraid of God that you are afraid to sin, that you hate sin…Every kind, all kinds, sin wherever it occurs. You do not rightly understand God unless seeing Him and what He is you are afraid to sin. And afraid of God because of His holiness, and because of what He will do. For if you sin and are his child, He will chasten unless you judge it and forsake it. And if you are not His child, it is just another nail driving you to the cross of death -- eternal separation from God, binding you to the doom. For if He sentenced His Son there, when His Son had your sin, that His Son might redeem you, you can understand what your lot will be if you spurn His Son. We ought to be afraid of God. We ought to serve God with fear.

And you ought to realize that this lowly Jesus who walks so humbly with men, the Lamb, meek and lowly, has been exalted. He is at the right hand of the Throne of God on high. And this is what John saw. You ought to worship Him. He is worthy of your worship. You ought to love Him. He loved you first with measureless and boundless everlasting love. You ought to pour forth your heart's adoration before Him. You ought to obey and gladly, because He is worthy to be obeyed. And there ought to rise out of our hearts tonight an echo of that song of the multitude that are washed, robes white, gathered even now in His presence. If you hearken, perhaps even in your hearts you can hear them as they sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. Unto Him who loved us, and who washed us in His blood, and made us kings and priests unto God, worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive riches and honor, and glory, and dominion, and majesty, and power and praise, now and forever.[51] This is the one of whom we speak. This is the

[51] Revelation 5:12

Revelation of Jesus Christ. This is the one you serve, the one whom you expect to meet, and the one who will reward you for every deed you have done in the body, whether it be good, or whether it be bad… Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Now we find here in the 16th verse, "And He had in His right hand seven stars." This was part of the revelation of Christ. He had there, held firmly in that hand of omnipotence, seven stars. Notice now in the 20th verse: "The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand." We are concerned about these seven stars, what they mean, what their significance may be, and why He has three times mentioned it. Well, actually a fourth, because in the 1st verse of the 2nd chapter: "These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars." Four times now we have this statement, seven stars. To what does it have reference?

First, the right hand of a King, the right hand of majesty is the hand that exercises authority, the hand that controls, the hand that directs. And so when He holds here in His hand seven stars, He thus is affirming that whatever these stars are they are under His direct control. Now let us think for a moment. Stars are light bearers in darkness. They themselves, unless we think of the planets which shine by reflected light, are stars by their own... serve the same purpose really, that is to illuminate the darkness. And so said He, He holds here something which is going to shine in darkness. The sun is obscured. The sun is hidden. And it is night. And He is holding seven stars. Light bearers. Points that are fixed. Light that is settled. And He controls them.

May I suggest to you that the Lord Jesus Christ said first, "I am the Light of the world."[52] That light which shown in darkness,

[52] John 8:12

that light which the Father gave to illuminate the stygian darkness of the human spirit. Had it not been for the coming of Jesus Christ, there would have been no answer to the enigma of life and the then tragedy of death. But our Lord Jesus was the Light that came in and lit a path out of Hell into Heaven, for we were certainly doomed to Hell by virtue of all our rebellion and crimes against God. And He became the Light, the Light as well as the Way, the Light as well as the Truth. Yes, the Light as well as the Life itself. And our Lord Jesus then said, "Ye are the lights of the world."[53] The little lights. The small lights that shine by light that He gives.

And now He speaks of the stars. These that are lights are set by Him in places to guide, to direct, to illuminate in darkness. May I suggest to you that the stars seem to me to be the angels of the seven churches. But that word angel is the word "messenger."[54] These are the seven messengers, the seven servants, (translated in the King James English) the seven angels. As I said, I am suggesting to you that these speak to us of those who ministered for Jesus Christ in the churches to which He is writing. Those who were appointed by Him to speak for Him, and to teach the truth to the congregation. That the stars speak of those to whom He has entrusted specific responsibility to teach, and to proclaim, and to establish doctrine.

Now this is a solemn thing that the Spirit of God has fixed for us here. I believe it is safe to say that you have never heard me, from the time I have been with you as your pastor, urge young

[53] Philippians 2:15

[54] Actually, it was an interesting thing. We had the word Malakia in the Arabic. The Malakias were the men who came around and took the heavy loads on their backs, and carried the mail and packages. They were the messengers that we sent. The word Malakia is the word from which we get our word Angel, the messengers; they were the servants.

men to go into the ministry. Now you say, "Why?" Well there is only one reason. I have seen too many young men in the ministry because someone urged them. I believe that when Jesus Christ wants to put someone into the ministry, He is adequate to speak to that person and make it clear. I believe that every Christian ought to be wholly committed to the will of God. It would be an utter contradiction to every Biblical principle that I hold dear and precious, if I were to give an invitation and say, "Surrender yourself to the Will of God in terms of full time service." For I believe that every Christian must be surrendered to the Will of God. And if he is not basically in that principle of true repentance, then he is not Christian…That the difference between a sinner and a saint is that the sinner lives to please himself, and a saint lives to please God. A sinner is governed by his own will, and a saint is governed by God's Will. A sinner has committed himself to please himself, and a saint has committed himself to please Jesus Christ. And God has a plan for every Christian; every believer is in the Body as a member to the Head.

I believe that every Christian is called to full time service. Every Christian is called to full time service, not in the sense however, of being supported by a congregation necessarily, but in the sense that whether a housewife with the tasks that seem to be sometimes verging on drudgery, or a man working in the office or the factory, earning the funds for daily bread, these are equally full-time service when one is there in the Will of God. And if they are not, they ought to get into the Will of God. If you are not in the Will of God, in what you are doing, you have no right to do it.

I believe Jesus Christ is just as concerned about the school that a teacher has, and the job that a clerk has, and the garage that a mechanic works in, and the factory that an employee has, as He is about a missionary or a pastor. I cannot see in the Scripture

any delineation in these terms between secular and sacred. In this sense, everyone is under direct and immediate and complete control of Jesus Christ. Now if you are there in this basic relationship with Him, it is a very simple matter for Him to say to you, "This is what I want you to do." And you will know. You will know. And God fixes the hooks of His purpose in your heart. You will know…you won't know the way I know, but if God has for you something beyond that which you are now doing, you can be perfectly sure of this, He will make it clear.

What about missionary service? I spent three years - four years of my life going around the colleges and universities and churches of the land, challenging young people to go to the Mission Field. And many responded. And many went. And tragically enough, many are home, with broken hearts, and broken hopes, and traumatic experiences of failure and grief that are a heartache to me. When the mission societies are to that place when they can distinguish between those that are there as the product of someone's challenge, and those that are there because of the leading of the Head of the Church, it may be that someone such as myself could have that ministry with freedom of heart and spirit. But I would rather turn to you and say, "There is a world out there filled with sinners for whom Jesus Christ died, and they ought to hear." And someone ought to go. Your life is His. Is it? You are abandoned to Him. Are you? You are committed to His will. Are you?

Then you are to look into the face of Jesus Christ and say, "Lord, here am I. Send me. Have thy way. Have thy will in my life." But I would like to think that you share with me at least some of this, if you do not see it all. When you surrender to Jesus Christ in repentance, you have changed the government of your life from your own two fists into those nail pierced hands. And that when you have said, "From today on my

purpose is to please Him," you meant it. You intended that you would please Him, however, wherever, whenever, in whatever manner He wished or He chose. This is what the Scripture teaches in regard to this commitment - an abandonment of every life in the Church to the total sovereignty of Jesus Christ. And He intends it to be that way, and I believe that when this is operating we will have no want of people to fill pulpits, and teach, and to fill mission stations.

I believe that when you are in that place of utter abandonment to the sovereignty of Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ has no great difficulty in moving you. The geographical aspects of the Christian life are the simplest to change. It is the attitudinal aspects that are so difficult. When He brings you to the place where there is that total, complete, and absolute commitment to Him, that utter, utter abandonment to His Sovereignty.

Now I do not believe this has reference to a few…to some, but to all. I refuse to distinguish because of the fact that I cannot find it in the Word of God. I refuse to distinguish in such dichotomous terms as laity and clergy. Oh I know. We have those who function in special relationships to a given congregation. But may I make it perfectly clear to you that the Scripture teaches that there is really one basic relationship to the Son of God, and that is, redeemed by His precious blood and brought into union with Him in death and resurrection. Brethren, filled with the fullness of God. He expects the same degree of abandonment on your part as He does the missionary. The same degree of fullness on your part as does the pastor. No distinguishing levels. God has no stepchildren…He does not have favorites. You are to be in the place where He puts you in as vital, in as precious, in as glorious a relationship to Jesus Christ as anyone, anywhere. Now when you are there, it is a very simple matter for the Head of the Church to move you here, to move you there, to

put you into this ministry, or to take you into that. But this Sovereign Head of the Church holds in His hand seven stars.

I believe that in His wisdom He has chosen through the ages past, even as at the time that He wrote, those whom He has entrusted with the responsibility of teaching, and preaching the Word. I would like to think, I would like to believe, and I think perhaps you would share with me that the man who edits this paper, of which we are so concerned for its extended ministry, could be thought of as a star held in the sovereign hand of Jesus Christ. Seeing as he waits before the Lord, and writing what he sees with the courage to go against the stream of his day and generation and say for Jesus Christ what would be said and need be said. I would not think of him in any unusual sense.

I am sure within this land of ours there are scores of people, although they may not have the gift, do have the courage and the stalwart faith, and solemn purpose, and heartfelt dedication to Jesus Christ. Any person, anywhere, that has been called of Him to stand as a spokesman, as a teacher, as a preacher, as a setter forth of truth, I think even in the 20th century as well as in the first [century] would find something of the place that he has held here in the right hand of Jesus Christ.

Certainly no church should want a pastor, or anyone to preach for them, that was not held in that right hand, controlled by that right hand, sustained by that nail pierced hand, taught by the one who holds them in His hand. Why would anyone sit? Why would they listen? Why would they think? Unless this were to be the case. No. I would say as best I can see the Word of God, that the star is simply the one there, as the setter forth of truth under the control of Jesus Christ, in the darkness until the Son Himself shall come, and spread the clouds and be the Light. Till that time, He will raise up through the centuries to

come, as in the centuries past should He tarry in His appearing, those who will stand for Him.

Our hearts grow weary when we think of the carnage in China. If you did not read Lowell Thomas' article in this current Readers Digest of "The Rape of Tibet by the Communists," I suggest you read it. Read it and weep. Read it and grieve. And read it and pray. And we see the Church in China as a Light almost extinguished, and all of us that have heard any reports from that land, cry out, "How long, Oh Lord Jesus? How long wilt thou let thy travailing Church go through the agony of these hours of darkness?" But I know one thing. And I say it with all there is in me. If our Lord tarries a thousand years, and Communism ravages the earth till every land has been destroyed by its influence, I assure you of this, the gates of Hell shall not prevail, for He holds seven stars in His hand. And there will be the witness to Jesus Christ. For He said, "I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it."[55] This man may go. That may pay with his blood. And the martyrs crown may be earned by another, but still the Son of God will have the perfect number of those whom He uses. He will raise up one, and still another.

I think of the testimony in Ethiopia when I think of the seven stars. The missionaries of the Sudan Interior Mission went into that country in 1928 and labored there for ten long wearisome years. And when they left, they left about seventy baptized believers and three elders; four that were appointed to be pastors. And when the invader came into Ethiopia, the first thing that was done was to take the pastors away from the churches and put them into prison. And now the young Church was left leaderless. What would they do? There was one man that had labored as a servant, a house servant, for one

[55] Matthew 16:18

of the missionaries, as a translator, as an interpreter. They had not thought that he was the "stuff" that would serve as a pastor, but the Spirit of God raised him up, anointed him, and when there was no one else God used him.

He would call the people together, and they would come at night down the ravines and gather in a quiet place, in a cave, sequestered little valley, in a lonely hut. He gathered in the elders. They would come in on Thursday morning, and they would read the Word and pray all day Thursday. Fast and pray. And then on Friday, they would study the Word together, and prepare their messages, for none of them knew how to speak. They had not been taught. But after a day of fasting and prayer, then there would be a day of preparation. And then on Saturday afternoon, after the midday meal, they would slip away one by one, back to their villages, and then on the Lord's Day they gathered the Christians for worship, and they would begin to preach.

In 1938 the door closed, and they had no further news from Ethiopia. And I remember joining with others in prayer that God would spare that church from extinction. I asked one of the missionaries that had lived in one of the larger areas, "What do you think we will find when the door does open?" He said, "I think we will find the Church, small but there." Well the time came when the back of the invader was broken; the British Government called the missionaries, and said, "Join us. We are going down into the area where you served." They went, in fear and trepidation, for now after these years they were to go back to find whether anything survived. And they came to this one station, and they saw some elders. And behind them was a company of about seven hundred men. They said, "Who are these?" "Oh, they are elders of the churches." And in those six years of captivity, the church had grown from seventy believers to over 20,000 baptized believers, with nearly another

20,000 that were preparing for baptism. From four churches to seventy churches. That right hand held its star. Nothing could extinguish it.

And then we notice here, He holds the seven churches - not in His hands. He holds the stars in His hands, and He walks in the candlesticks. Now this candlestick is not to be confused with the one in the Tabernacle. The one in the Tabernacle, as you recall, had a large bowl and from it seven branches. But not this. These are seven, distinct, similar candlesticks; each placed in its own ground, and standing upon its own basin. Seven candlesticks. And John said, "He saw the Son of Man in the midst, walking in the midst of the seven (golden) candlesticks."[56] If, as we have said, the stars are those servants of God whom He calls to minister with blessing to the Church, and the Church the candlesticks, then what do we find? We find that Christ sustaining, directing, and dwelling in His Church. And furthermore, we find that Jesus Christ is revealing Himself through His Church. That this is the truth. He is revealing Himself to the Church, through these whom He serves.

Think for a moment of the tremendous blessing inheritance that we have in Martin Luther[57]. Oh, how your heart ought to thank God at every remembrance of this dear man that valiantly stood against his day, and dared to hazard the wrath of the invincible church. We ought to think also with the same deep gratitude to John Calvin[58]. I care not what your background may be. But I trust that there is sufficient charity of spirit that, should your lineage be traced to Calvin, you can

[56] Revelation 2:1
[57] Martin Luther (1483 - 1546) German monk, former Catholic priest, who wrote the Ninety-Five Theses.
[58] John Calvin (1509 - 1564) was a prominent French theologian during the Protestant Reformation and the father of the theological system known as Calvinism.

look with deep gratitude and thanksgiving to God who raised up John Wesley. And should your lineage be through John Wesley you can look to God with deep gratitude for John Calvin and John Knox[59], and realize that each served well the Lord he loved, and the generation to which he was called.

But it is not just men that God uses. He uses men to bless the Church, and He uses the Church to reveal Himself. The ultimate revelation of Jesus Christ does not come through a man, either to preach or to teach. The ultimate revelation of Jesus Christ comes through the Church, the local Church. I believe in the local Church. I am so convinced of it that the history of the Church is the history of repeated failures and blessings. The Lord raises up a church, raises up a testimony, raises up a ministry, and has glory from it because of the dedication, the abandonment, the obedience of one generation, of two, of three. And all too often the history has been that the 3rd, the 4th generation have lost the principles that were precious to the fathers. It becomes formal, ceremonial, ritualistic and dead.

What does Jesus Christ do? Does He say, "The Church has failed?" No. He just does it all over again. He may do it right there. He may do it right in the same building. He may do it in the same place, but it is always the Church. The unit that He works with is the Church. It does not have to be an organization. It does not have to be on a property. The Church is not an organization. It is an organism. It is a company of people who are banded together by the Spirit of God in love for Jesus Christ, in worship of the Triune God, and in mutual strength and encouragement and in witness. The Church is a simple thing -- two or three gathered together constitute the simplest and most primitive form of the Church. It can be a

[59] John Knox (1514 - 1572) The foremost leader of the Scottish Reformation.

larger company such as this, with the necessity by virtue of the company of officers, of elders and deacons, and those entrusted with the responsibility for fiscal matters and organizational interests. I do not believe that there is any particular form of Church which is the ultimate. At least I do not know about it at the moment. I think that Brethrenism on the one extreme, and the Episcopacy on the other, and all the forms that lie in between are in the same danger from the same source. Namely, becoming formal. Losing vitality and spiritual reality. I am told that there is nothing more dead than a Plymouth Brethren Meeting when the glory of Christ departs, and the wonder of the presence of the Lord is gone. I am told by whom? By those most loyal, and zealous, and earnest Brethren. And I am told that there is nothing more dead than the ceremony of the Episcopacy when the ritual of prayer is offered by someone who does not understand or believe it. And I have not had experience on either of these extremes, but I have moved about somewhat in the middle, and I can assure you that there is no denominational protection that can insure the preservation of spiritual life. And every church is subject to the same kind of temptation, namely, to become ritualistic and dead, and lose thus its light and lose its place, and lose its ministry.

Now our Lord Jesus has eyes as flames of fire. And from these, we discover that He saw right down into the corporate personality of each church. And I wonder what that corporate personality would be if He were to see tonight into our hearts as a people here. Each letter setting forth of that corporate life that the group represents to Him. Each one is described as being under God, and thus seen by Him, known by Him, judged by Him, responsible to Him.

Now our Lord Jesus has said that He will reveal Himself in the midst of the Church. I believe that the history of the last two thousand years, as far as the areas and countries that have had

Christian testimony are concerned, can be written from the point of view of Satanic attack upon the Church…upon its doctrines, upon its teachings, upon the ethics, the morals, and its people…That you can only understand the history of these last two thousand years by a Satanic plot to destroy the effectiveness of the Church, and usually it has been destroyed by ceremonialism, by ritualism, by doctrinal promotion. But there have been groups that have held doctrinal purity and simple ceremony, and yet have lost the blessing of God because even in this they have lost the sense of His presence and their responsibility to Him. I think you cannot understand nor explain the conquest of Russia by Communism apart from the decadence and powerlessness, and meaninglessness of the Orthodox Church. We are told that the land where the Catholic regime is the strongest is the land where Communism makes its most successful invasion. In Western Europe rather, we are most frightened by the two nations which have the strongest Catholic influence. Namely, France and Italy. May I say that just to the degree to which American Protestantism, or Catholicism, or any other religion you wish, loses its grip upon the people, to that degree we become susceptible to any other kind of an invasion.

It was Sorokin[60], the sociologist, that wrote in one of his books in the late thirties, that the moment that religion becomes peripheral, that is crowded from the center out to the periphery, out to the rim if you want to use the image of a wheel…the moment it leaves the hub and goes to the rim, that society has begun to disintegrate and is susceptible to any type of vigorous ideology that comes in where the idea and the theories and the beliefs are still in the center.

[60] Pitirim Alexandrovich Sorokin (1889 -1968) was a Russian American sociologist born in modern-day Komi (Finno-Ugric region of Russia).

Now, beloved, you can be a member of the Gospel Tabernacle Church of New York, and still with all of our doctrine that we love and for which we stand with our missionary program so dear and precious to our heart, and still have a peripheral type of religious experience. What is the heart of your life? What consumes you; the glory of Jesus Christ, the sovereignty of God's Son? I think if I could listen to you talk for twenty four hours I could pretty well say the depth of reality in your experience. What do you talk about? Do you talk about Christ? Do you talk about His Word? Do you talk about His truth? You talk about what is important to you. Now, unless Christ is in the center of your life, unless He is there controlling and governing, and your whole life is lived out from this center, then to the degree to which the Church is made up of people like you, if this is your case, to that degree the Church has lost its Light. To that degree the Church has lost its revelation of Christ, and to that degree it is coming under the judgment of Christ. Because the Church is made up of people, and the place where Christ is seen in the midst of the candlestick, is when the members, those who compose the group, whether it be large or small, are consumed with love for Jesus Christ, and are utterly committed to Him, absolutely abandoned to Him. So when we stop to think about it now, our Lord has revealed in this that the Church depends upon those whom He holds in His right hand, who speak to her in love.

Do you think that John wanted to write to the church here and say, "I will spew thee out of my mouth."[61] He did not want to do that. But he was held in the right hand of the Son of God. And consequently, we are brought face to face with this, that we must face what Jesus Christ says to us; and what is He saying?

[61] Revelation 3:16

Oh, I would to God I could bring before you Martyn Lloyd Jones[62] of England for three weeks or a month's ministry, and let you hear what God is saying from this man on the other side of the water. Every occasion possible I bring before you Dr. Tozer[63] and others through our Missionary Convention. This past Convention was a declaration from the Throne of God and the heart of God that I have never experienced in twenty five years of ministry. I have never heard such a total message, with every man speaking with anointed lips as this year. Never have I experienced such a thing. And I believe that Jesus Christ is speaking to the Church again, seeking to get through it a vehicle to reveal His glory.

Now the Church is true, and pure, and blessable when it needs what He says through the stars, the messengers, those that speak to it. And the Church therefore, is to be where the truth is. You will always find the Church where the truth is. Now this was the great conflict of the Reformation. The Roman Catholics said, truth is where – or the Church is here where we are. We are the Church. And we tell you what is true. And Martin Luther turned it right around. He said, "No. You are not the Church, unless you are where the truth is. The Church always is found where the truth is." And this summarizes and epitomizes the conflict of the Reformation. The Church is where the truth is, and Christ is where the Church is.

Now, this is the heart of regeneration. The Roman Catholic Church still preaches salvation. I have picked up their literature and read…Their doctrinal "dishortations" on the New Birth. And I find absolutely nothing with which to disagree. This is

[62] David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899 - 1981) A Welsh Protestant minister, preacher and medical doctor who was influential in the Reformed wing of the British evangelical movement in the 20th century.
[63] Aiden Wilson Tozer (1897 - 1963) Pastor and Author, Christian and Missionary Alliance Magazine Editor.

the difference. The message is true. The method is heretical. And so, only where the messenger, the malakia, the star stands for what Jesus Christ has to say, can the Church be what Jesus Christ would have it be, and can the Church bear the light that Jesus Christ would have it bear and be -- can He be revealed through it.

Now I make reference again to something that came some days ago. I have been reading again, and as I have told you shall continue, the *Life and Work and Ministry of John Wesley*. And oh how last Sunday night after the service and several times during the week my heart has melted within me and on occasion tears filled my eyes, when I hear this man saying to the little group of twelve, the Class Meeting, the larger group gathering on Friday night nearest the full moon so they could have the light to come and go by, gathering there in love feast, in worship and preaching. And then when he had a church that loved Jesus Christ with all their hearts they would go to the common in the open and stand there and the people would come from the coal mines and the zinc mines, and the factories, and the mills and one of them, not always Wesley but often, would stand and speak. And Wesley says in his journal, "It was as though lightning struck them. And they lay upon the ground." What do you mean? Oh, Jesus Christ had found a candlestick. And He could be shown. And that Jesus Christ is looking for a candlestick, the Church, the people that are willing to see Him high and lifted up, and fall on their faces before Him, in utter, absolute abandonment to Him. And such a witness from such a Church He can, He will seal. He has done it in the past. And He will do it again.

Revival? What is revival? A revival is a normal church, a scripturally sound church, a church that has the right relationship to Jesus Christ and to each other, and to the world. And when He can find a people like that, Christ is willing to

presence Himself in the midst of the people. And when He does that, sinners will see and fear, and be converted, and come to Christ.

Seven stars and seven candlesticks. He holds the stars in His hand, and He walks in the midst of the candlesticks. I wonder if He is walking in the midst of this candlestick? This church? Oh, let us meet Him that He may. And if you are here unsaved, wait not for that day, for it is Jesus Christ you believe in, not us, not me. And He is still mighty to save, and strong to deliver. He will meet your heart need tonight. And you need not defer. You fall before Him. Acknowledge your sin. Confess your transgressions. See His wounded side, and the fountain of blood that flowed from it. Receive pardon, forgiveness, cleansing, eternal life. Those of us that name the name of Jesus Christ, let us fall at His feet, allow Him to purge us, and cleanse us, and fill us with Himself, and put us in the candlestick through which He can reveal Himself. Seven stars. Seven candlesticks. And Christ walking in the midst.

Let us pray.

How greatly, our Father, does our generation need the revelation of Jesus Christ in His majesty, in His glory, in His righteousness in His holiness! They have heard so much of the platitudes. They have heard so much of stereotyped doctrine. They have heard so much axiom. Words. And they have seen so little of the glory of Christ manifest that in the candlestick; the Light bearers that glow with the oil, incandescent with the presence of a risen Christ, manifesting the holiness and beauty and purity, the invisible light that sets forth Christ, and hides itself.

Oh, Father of our Lord Jesus, how we ask thee tonight to make us such a Church. We have above us thy Word, "The Lord thy

God in the midst of thee is mighty."[64] We believe this is thy purpose for every church, and for this one. We believe that only this revelation of Jesus Christ in and through the Church is adequate to meet the need of our day, and our weary, disillusioned generation, that sees no relevance in Christianity, and no significance to church, and dares to echo the fact that religion is but an opiate of the people, and has no vitality and significance. Oh God, wilt thou find in us a people that thou canst bless, and wherein the Lord Jesus Christ can reveal Himself in the splendor of who He is. And in this revelation of who He is, there will be those smitten through the heart by the revelation of what they are, seeing themselves as sinners, monstrous rebels, at war with thee. And they will fall upon their faces, acknowledging their crimes and their transgressions to receive pardon and forgiveness, and eternal life through faith in thy Son whose side was wounded. Whose life was poured forth that He might redeem lost men such as us. Father, we ask thee that there shall come upon us a sense of thy holiness, a sense of awe, a sense of fear and grant, Lord, that there shall come to all of us a realization that if we are Christians in a day when the world is on fire there is only one proper attitude, the total abandonment to all that Jesus Christ is in Himself and will be in us. Then thou wilt call out those to go forth from us as stars to shine in darkness of Africa, India and China, and stars to shine in their communities, testifying to the truth of all thou art. Thou wilt do it. And we will be that candlestick, for we are revealing the splendor and glory of Jesus Christ.

Such a city of such awful need as this deserves a church here on this corner, in this dark place, that is everything that thou dost intend thy Church to be. We plead the precious blood of Christ. We ask for thy working. We pray Lord that the Spirit of God

[64] Zephaniah 3:17

will work with us during the days of this week because of our willingness, because of our waiting, because of our meditation, because of the openness of heart, and yieldedness of spirit. May this be a week in which thy glorious purpose is forwarded, and brokenness shall come upon us, and openness toward thee shall be our part. And thou canst work that work for which we groan, for which we wait. Yea, for which we thank thee in faith, the revelation of Jesus Christ in our midst in His glory. For His name.

If you are here without Christ tonight, we invite you to stay. Remain where you are. I wonder if there is an unsaved person that by upraised hand would say, "Pray for me. I know not the Son of God, and I want to know Him, and I want you to remember me in closing prayer." Would you put your hand up? We will see it. Yes, I see your hand. God bless you and save you. Another? Anyone? For this one, our Father, whose hand is raised we pray. Oh, sovereign God, in all grace work deliverance in this life. We plead the precious blood of Christ and pray that the Holy Ghost will bring to life in thy dear Son. In His name and for His sake. Amen.

Let us stand for the benediction. Now unto Him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Savior, be Glory and Honor, Dominion and Majesty, Now and Forever. Amen.

The Victor's Life Food

Now, please turn, to Revelation Chapter 2, and I shall read the first seven verses. This constitutes the text of the evening: "Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write: These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, Who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."[65]

Now through the centuries in the past, the Church has had two attitudes toward these letters to the seven churches, the letters that Jesus Christ Himself dictated and sent to these churches. There have been a large group of honored men that have felt that these letters had application primarily to seven churches that existed at the time. This described the conditions that prevailed in these churches, and the attitude of the Lord Jesus Christ toward the churches. There has been another group in its extreme degree that has found in every number, in every

[65] Revelation 2:1-7

symbol, in every illustration, in fact almost every line, some prophetic significance, and perhaps would have been pressing the Scripture out of its practical application into its prophetic significance. Now I do not have any intention of resolving this problem. Very likely the text in these five…seven churches…the letters to the seven churches are both practical, dealing with churches that then were, and prophetic, applying to the period of time since then. Perhaps in degree more practical than any have understood and more prophetic than any have thought. And it is certainly beyond the scope of the intentions of this hour to try and solve that problem. I think we do well to make personal application to your own heart, to let it have prophetic significance where you see it, but to remember that the one who is speaking is the Lord Jesus Christ. And He is speaking to a church. And after all, we are not as nearly interested finally in whether or not it applies to the church of that day, or the church of some other day, as we are in discovering the mind of Christ toward the Church at any time.

"Sir, we would see Jesus." And if I fail somehow to let you see Him, then I have failed. So, we are not trying to pinpoint the church to which it was sent as much as to magnify the one who sent the letter.

Let us go back, if you please, to verse 12 of the 1st Chapter. John tells us the one that appeared to him: "And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks. And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were a flame of fire."[66] It is this that I wish you to see: His eyes were a flame of fire. A penetrating flame, a flame that

[66] Revelation 1:12-14

could see right into this Church at Ephesus, and see all that there was to be seen on the part of the church and its corporate personality and the individual members of that church.

Now, let us take just a moment to acquaint ourselves with the church to which this letter is addressed. Standing on the Island of Patmos and looking northeast, the nearest city to where John would have stood was the city of Ephesus. It was the most prominent city in that part of Asia Minor. It was a commercial city, a seat of learning, of government, of wealth, of religion. You recall that Paul spent some two years in Ephesus, laboring there with the mighty power of God upon his ministry. Great miracles were performed. In fact, the preaching of the Word was so effective, that on one occasion the converts brought their books dedicated to their heathen deities and the barn fire that was kindled was said to have had a value of over 50 thousand pieces of silver. A tremendous conflagration, because of the working of the Spirit of God in the hearts of men.

John himself, the one to whom Christ dictated the letter, had at one time served as the pastor of the Church at Ephesus, and knew well the people that were there. But undoubtedly that which he heard from the lips of Christ would have had confirmation in his heart, but certainly far had exceeded his own insight into the nature of the people that he had served and thus loved so well. Apollos had been converted in Ephesus, and Timothy had made his home there. Tradition quite well verified tells us that on one occasion when Timothy was an older man, and not the young man of whom Paul wrote that he upbraided and rebuked the pagan revelers because of the immorality that accompanied one of the great festivals. They were aroused with anger to the degree to which they took stones and slew Timothy. He became a martyr then in his own town.

It is to this church where the Gospel made such tremendous inroads that the coppersmiths felt that their business would be destroyed, and so raised havoc against Paul and the Christians. This church that had seen such a magnificent testimony of Christ, to which the Lord Jesus Christ now Himself sends this testimony concerning the church. First they had heard a testimony concerning Christ, and now He sends His Word concerning them…The first thing that He does, you would expect of Him…And incidentally may I call to your attention one of the lovely little byways that you find here in this first verse, "These things sayeth He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand." We saw last week that the stars speak of the preachers, the teachers, the prophets; those whom God sends to minister to the Church. Generally speaking those who hurt us most, help us most, and so He said, "Now do not turn on John." He is the one that is writing. Do not get angry with him, because I am the one that holds the seven stars in my hand. And to get to one who speaks for the Lord, you have to come through the nail pierced hand of the Son of God to do it.

And then He said, "I walk in the midst of the candlesticks with flame of fire." And so said He, as He began His letter, "Do not turn your wrath and ire against the one that I am using to communicate my message." "Remember I am the one that is writing," said the Son of God. You test yourself by what is said, not by who says it. You often hear people say, "When you are criticized, consider the source." Of course, this is very poor advice. When we are criticized we ought to consider the criticism, regardless of the source. It does not make any difference who says it. The question is, is it true? And when Jesus Christ is the source, when He is the one that speaks, we ought to give unusual care and attention to everything that He says.

The first thing He does is to reveal that His eyes as flames of fire have seen into the corporate personality of this church. He knows because He looks not upon the outward appearance, but He looks upon the heart. And the first thing He sees is what is good. You would expect this of the Lord, wouldn't you? The one who through his servant Paul said, "Approve things that are excellent,"[67] certainly would be expected to find whatever was commendable in this church. And notice, though He has something quite cutting and revealing to say subsequently, He begins by giving honor to whom honor is due. I know thy works and thy labor, and thy patience.

The members of this church had labored much, had labored long to fulfill the will of God, and truly it requires labor. You recall when our Lord Jesus was speaking, He said, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Not just try. Not just work or labor, but strive to enter in at the strait gate, "for strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth to life everlasting."[68]

Perhaps we oversimplify to the point of absurdity. I would not be surprised that I have been guilty of that in the past. You know, to say to someone, "Well only believe," or, "Just believe on the Lord Jesus," is true; but it could be, unless you have given adequate explanation previously, that it is not all the truth. It is true that salvation is by grace through faith, but it is also true that when the Gospel came to those at Thessalonica they turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God. Now the difficulty is not so much turning to God, but it is turning from idols. For it will soon be discovered that there are those who can hold that the worship of idols is the condition for their friendship and their fellowship. And if you turn from serving idols you will discover often that your own family will

[67] Philippians 1:10
[68] Matthew 7:14

turn on you. Many there are who, being born into Jewish homes, Orthodox homes, have heard of the Lord Jesus Christ and have put their trust in Him, only to be disowned and sent from the family.

Elsie Clere, a dear friend of my wife and myself in the city of Chicago, had an experience with her family. Hearing of her faith in Christ, and finding themselves unsuccessful, had a funeral in which her large picture was placed in the bottom of the casket and it was buried. And when the mother passed Elsie on the street of Chicago, she looked right through her without seeing her. It was…It is easy, yes. But it is costly. And there was a labor here. And He had seen it. He had seen what it meant and what it cost, and the price that was involved. You begin by striving, and you continue by standing. Stand, and having done all to stand.[69] This word is not just stand complacently, but it is a Greek word - I told you before - anthistémi - come against, so as to cause to stop. Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, is just prelude to what we later read: "Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."[70] And then Paul concludes his own testimony with, "I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith."[71]

Now someone might think that this is a prolonged ride on a spiritual carrousel, but the marks on the body of Paul would prove that it had been something far more than that. And so when the Lord Jesus Christ writes to the Church at Ephesus, He says, I know thy works. I know what it has cost you. I know what it means. He has not only had to fight -- they have not only had to fight with wicked men, but they have also had to resist the powers of darkness that have arrayed themselves. "A

[69] Ephesians 6:13
[70] 2 Timothy 2:3
[71] 2 Timothy 4:7

man's foes shall be they of his own household,"[72] and the god of this world sets himself against the child of God. I know thy works.

And then the next thing we find is that the Lord Jesus Christ commends the church because of their invincible patience. "And thy patience." Just three words. Patient persistence is a trait of character that is absolutely essential for the life and growth of a Christian, and of a church. Paul wrote wisely and needfully when in 1Corinthians 15 he said, "Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord for as much as your labor is not in vain in the Lord." When he wrote to the church at Colosse he said, "I have joy in beholding your order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ." The honor role of the Church is still open for the one that is willing to stand for Jesus Christ.

I suppose one of the best illustrations of patience that we can find in modern missionary history is that of Adoniram Judson[73]. A man that was almost abandoned by his own society because of the lack of interest in missions, who experienced tremendous sickness in his body, indescribable illness from which you would never have thought him to have recovered. He was in prison. In fact, there was one time when his feet were put in stocks so that only the small of his back, his shoulders touched the straw strewn floor of the cell. And for months at a time, he knew nothing but privation, sickness, abuse, imprisonment, neglect. And yet he persisted, in spite of all odds until the Church of Jesus Christ was planted in Burma and became one of the strongest missionary churches of which we have read.

[72] Matthew 10:36

[73] Adoniram Judson, Jr. (1788-1850) First Protestant missionary sent to Burma.

Another instance of patience that certainly ought to challenge every heart and indicates that this honor role is still open was that of David Livingstone[74]; the lad who was denied the privilege of an education…So while he worked at the spinning mill would take the Greek text and set it up upon a rack, and as he ran back and forth tending the bobbin, he would read a word and try to memorize it, patiently learning line upon line. Trying to build into his mind that fabric of knowledge which when enabled would enable him ultimately to become a doctor, and a scientist of no mean success, and a geographer of international world fame, and a botanist who did much in recording the fauna of the Great Dark Continent. But above all, that missionary, who for the love of lost men would plod day after day. Though sick with malaria, shaking with fever, abandoned by his carriers, robbed of his goods, with all of the inducements that could be offered by Henry Stanley and the world that waited to acclaim and honor him, David Livingstone had to press on because of an unfinished task. And of him, surely the Head of the Church says, I know thy patience. I know thy patience.

Morrison[75] of China, another. And we could add to the list. It is being made today. The role is not complete, and there is room for you. There is room for you. And I submit to you that, if the church of which you are a part, whether it be here or elsewhere is to be that church which the Head of the Church can bless and use, it will be because you are patient. I think it would be fair to say that the Church is probably no more patient than you are. You know I suppose everyone would be a farmer if he could harvest the grain the day after he had planted it. But you know, you have to plant it, and leave it, and go away. And it dies, and

[74] David Livingstone (1813-1873) was a Scottish Congregationalist pioneer medical missionary with the London Missionary Society and an explorer in Africa.
[75] George Ernest "G. E." Morrison (1862 – 1920), also known as Morrison of Peking or Chinese Morrison

sometimes I am sure the farmer's expectancy dies when he sees the skies as brass, and no rain, and the sun burning and searing. It is a difficult task to be a farmer, but I do not suppose it is more difficult than any other kind of accomplishment. And patience is that which the Lord Jesus has seen. I wonder if He were writing a letter to you, He could say: "I know thy patience." Perhaps you have been troubled by impatience. How many there are whose lives have been ruined. The going gets a little hard, so they throw up everything and run. No. I know thy patience. I know thy patience. To stand steadfastly, unmovable, abounding in the work of the Lord, this characterized the Church at Ephesus.

And then the Church was commended by Christ because of its discriminating zeal, and its righteous discipline. "I know thy works. I know thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil" -- discriminating zeal -- and righteous discipline.

Wherever Bible standards of life and practice are abandoned, God's blessing is removed. Now this is an axiom of the Christian life. When you abandon Divine standards, and Divine discipline, then you also forfeit Divine blessing. There are many times when a Christian has allowed sin in his life, and because he has gotten by on Monday, having sinned on Saturday, he says, "Well the Lord did not see. The Lord does not understand." But payday does not always come on Saturday night. And when the Scripture says, "Be sure your sin will find you out,"[76] you can be absolutely sure that this is absolutely what will happen. And Jesus Christ said, "I see and know, and commend you for the fact that you canst not bear them which are evil." There is still a truth that must be remembered by the Church today, as in the time of Ephesus. It

[76] Numbers 32:23

is either put out those who pollute, or get out from the pollution. Put out or get out. It is unfortunate that it is this way, but so it is. Too often now the question is not, "How can we weed out imposters, and how can we rid ourselves of that which is going to stand in the way?" but, "How far can we go and compromise with the world and with heresy without getting caught?"

One of the great churches of the past century was the Clarendon Street Church in Boston. Many of you will remember, recognize, the name of Dr. A. J. Gordon[77], who was greatly used of God, as was the church. Unfortunately, now that church in Boston is almost extinct, virtually without testimony. W. B. Riley[78], writing about that great church many years ago, said that he came across a statement by the Rev. Baron Stowe[79] who was Gordon's predecessor at Clarendon Street, and this statement explained to him why God used Clarendon Street Church for the world blessing. Pastor Stowe wrote, "A church cannot prosper that connives at sin in its members. And that charity which shrinks from plain faithful dealing with offenders is false charity, and deeply injurious. A straight forward course in discipline in accordance with the rule laid down by the Savior is the only one that will insure His approval and His continued blessing. Discipline is absolutely necessary if we are to have blessing."

May I remind you that Israel had to be cast away for the reconciling of the world, and so apostates and rebels against God have to be cast away from the Church for the reconciling of the world. And it is always this way. If there is to be a

[77] A.J. Gordon (1836-1895) came to prominence in the United States as the pastor of Clarendon Street Baptist Church in Boston for over 25 years
[78] Rev. Dr. William Bell Riley (1861-1947) Pastor of the First Baptist Church, Minneapolis, MN. and educator
[79] Rev. Baron Stowe Predecessor at Clarendon Street Church Boston

reconciling of the unsaved to Jesus Christ, then the Church must be clean. And this church is commended because they could not bear them which were evil. They tried those that said they were apostles and were not. You see, everyone that comes preaching is not to be received. I think an excellent editorial in the Alliance Witness some years ago, one that I wish I could quote verbatim, but the substance of it was that many times God's dear sheep allow men to come and to take from them their money and their enthusiasm, and their life. Men who are not worthy, as the editor said, to clean out the sheepfold are the ones who sit down and shear the sheep and injure them in the shearing. Well this is true. And I believe that this church was one where the Spirit of God had found men and women, an entire company that had discernment, and could see.

Let me ask you tonight, have you ever asked God to give you spiritual discernment? You know, it is a terribly costly thing. If everyone were blind, one of the greatest handicaps you could have would be to be able to see, because you would be describing things that your blind compatriots would deny existed. The fact that they were real would have no meaning to your fellows. If God gives you the gifts of discernment and enables you to see, you can be of help to the Church but I assure you from the testimony of those that He has thus blessed, it is a terribly lonely life. But are you prepared?

Here was a church that was prepared to see, and when someone came to them with some manner of doctrine and teaching, claiming to be apostles, they tested it by the Word. And if it did not match up to the Word, they did not accept it. But they owned these people for what they were, as liars, refused to hear them. This is, of course, one of the characteristics of maturity in the Christian life, and by this testimony Christ says to a degree they were mature. You recall how He said, "That we all might come in the knowledge of the

Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."[80] So He commended the Church.

From this text we learn something very wonderful. The condescension of our Blessed Lord. He saw something wrong, but He dwelt more upon what was right, and what could be commended than what was wrong. Would you like to be able to distinguish between the voice of God in your life, and the voice of Satan? I am sure you would. And right here is the place that you see it illustrated. You see, God the Son wanted the Church pure and blessable. What was right, He recognized. He commended them for it. What was wrong, He told them. And if they would deal as He prescribed with what was wrong, they would enjoy His blessing. Now in contrast to that is the attack of the enemy which may come directly to your own imagination or mind, or from some person. But you can always tell the difference. If someone comes to you, and they are definitely interested in you, and they are coming as a messenger of God, this is the way they are going to speak. They are going to recognize what is right. They are going to be grateful for what is right. And then, with all candor and honesty, they are going to tell you what is wrong. The enemy always depresses. His purpose is not to make you holy, but to make you discouraged. His end is not to bring you to where you ought to be, but to keep you from where you should be.

And so, the manner in which Satan will deal with you is this, "You never do what you ought to do. You always…You are

[80] Ephesians 4:13-15

forever …" Depressing, pressing down, submerging, hurting, injuring, discouraging. This is never true of Christ or anyone that Christ sends to you. I am sure that a Christian that is earnestly seeking to serve the Lord Jesus Christ is quite prepared to hear anyone that He would send. Ought to be at least. But you expect that they will be fair - fairness and justice in judgment, the recognition of what is good, as well as an indictment of what is wrong. The Son of God, as busy as He is, and as occupied as He is with the ruling of the world, with all authority in Heaven and earth His, had time enough to say to this church, "I know thy works, thy labor, thy patience. Thou canst not bear with them that are evil." And He tells them what is right, and He encourages them, and lifts them, and lets them know that He is interested in it, and grateful for everything that He does.

Now if you want to help anyone, you be sure that you have the same degree, or some degree at least, of charity as it is manifested here by the Lord Jesus. And if you go, do not be as the foolish parent who, seeing a fly on the baby's forehead, takes a bat to kill it and ruins the child with it. But if you want to help someone, you come with an appropriate instrument for the task. You come simply to commend them for what you see is right, and appreciate what is good, and rejoice in what is blessed. Lay that before them. And then say, "But my dear brother... My sister... There is this…" And you would be amazed the gratitude with which it would be received. I am sure this is the case. You see, the Lord Jesus does not dwell more than is absolutely necessary on the faults of the people, but He expands with delight upon their virtues, and their accomplishments.

Now He does condemn them. And His condemnation rests upon them for their falling away from their first love. "I have

somewhat against thee, thou hast left thy first love."[81] Once they had been full of love to Christ, and for a season at least everything they did in obedience to Him had its spring and its source in their love for the Lord Jesus. But now this love has waxed cold. And their obedience has been by the dictate of their understanding, rather than the fruit of their love. I am sure that outwardly their lives had not changed at all. I do not think, from the reading of this, that they had gone into gross sins, worldliness, and the sin of the Nicolaitans. In fact, it says, "Thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate." And Nicolaitanism is worldliness, in a word. He says you hate it, and you have not gone into these gross worldly sins, but I have this against you, that your love for me has waxed cold. You are doing what you are doing out of a sense of duty instead of out of love and out of deep inner flow of life. Outwardly, I say, it would seem exactly the same as it was, but inwardly the heart was so different.

Cowper[82] wrote a hymn that was such a blessing to those that heard it: Oh for a closer…wanted to read it to you, but I have not found it--[83] "Oh for a closer walk with God." And in it he describes the fact that his heart had become enamored with little things, the small inconsequential things that had dulled his love for the Lord Jesus. I am sure this is what has happened here. They have not gone into gross sin, but simply have allowed the deep flow of love for the Lord Jesus to grow cold and dim. And so, having condemned them for this, you would think this would be so unimportant. But you see to the Lord Jesus the fact that they are doing the same thing from the wrong motive and the wrong source is tremendously

[81] Revelation 2:4
[82] William Cowper (1731-1800) was an English poet and hymnodist
[83] See end of chapter

important. And He deals with it as the sin it is, because it will ultimately lead to all other sins.

Let me put it this way. If you are living as a Christian today because you think you ought to, and not because you love Him, it won't be very long until you are not living as a Christian. If you are reading the Word today just because you think you ought to read it and not because you love it, it won't be long before you cease reading it. If you are witnessing just because you have a sense of obligation to witness and not because there is a love for Christ and His love shed abroad in your heart for others, it won't be long before you stop witnessing. And the Lord Jesus saw that this lack of first love was going to be the root of all the deterioration of their life and their testimony, and He dealt with it as the sin that it is. All such decay of experience must be repented of.

You know there is such a thing as repentance on the part of a church. And this church had to hear it, for He wrote to the church. And I am sure that the elders of that church received the Word, deeply moved by it because it came from the Son of God, described and pictured by the Apostle John. And it came with all the mark of authority upon it. I can see these dear brethren examining their hearts, and rejoicing that the Lord had seen something to commend, but at the same time the church, its representatives and its leaders, breaking before God because they acknowledge the truth that they had left their first love.

This should be the case in every church whenever there seems to be a decline of power, a lessening of God's blessing upon the church and its ministry. It always ought to be that the church comes low before God. But ultimately the church only truly repents when each member of the church repents. And the

repentance is just in degree to the repentance of the individual member.

Let me ask you a few questions. Have you left your first love? What of your delight in God's Word? Do you read it because you love it, because your soul is thrilled that you are communicating with the lover of your soul? Did you ever read the Word that way? Did you ever have that kind of a relationship to His Book? Did you ever find yourself delighted and enthralled that Christ is speaking to you. And you know, if once your love for God's Word was here, and somehow it has withered and wandered, you have left your first love. And He called this a sin. And He commanded them to repent.

What about the ordinances? What about the Lord's Table? What about the prayer of the church? Once it was a delight. Is it still? What about secret prayer? Is your heart drawn to the closet where you can get alone with Him? Does the fact that you have an hour to spend with the Son of God thrill you and move you? Do you have a longing to be where He is, alone with Him in His presence? Did you ever? Well if once the secret place of prayer was here in your life, this level of reality and joy, and now it is here, you have left your first love. What about the fact that in the early days of your Christian life you were so grieved when you grieved Him. Are you still? Or is it possible for you to say things that once would have broken your heart? And do things that once would have melted your spirit? And now you are impervious to it. If that has happened you know, then you have left your first love.

What about your concern for the unsaved? Once you wept over the lost. Once you were deeply moved by it. Have you lost that tenderness, that compassion, that sensitivity to their need? Could it be that you have left your first love? If so, hear this word of the Son of God. He is speaking to you. What does He

say, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen."[84] The first thing is remember. Remember. Remember. Remember what your life used to be. Remember what your attitudes used to be. Remember what your delight in His Word used to be. Remember what your sensitivity to sin used to be. Remember what your burden for the lost used to be. Remember. The only way you can ever know where you have gone is by remembering. Remember.

Then the second thing He says is, repent. Repent. What does this mean? Change your attitude about the things that have produced this. "Repent and do the first works, or else I will come to thee quickly and remove thy candlestick out of his place except thou repent." This is sin. And this is the place that the Lord Jesus Christ wants to touch sin, when it is in the affections, when it is in the heart. If it is not dealt with here, I assure you it will go further. He is saying to you, if you will recognize that all sins begin with the decline of love for the Lord Jesus and deal with that decline of love as the sin it is, He said I will spare you such grief and such heartache. If you do not…If you have left your first love…If a church has left its first love and refuses to repent, He says I will come quickly and remove thy candlestick out of its place except thou repent.

The picture of this is the barren fig tree. You recall how that day the Lord came, expecting to find fruit but He found only leaves, He cursed the fig tree. It withered, and it died. How often has the Lord Jesus Christ come to a church with the profession of truth and testimony, and He looked to find fruit that would feed those perishing, to find that there were only leaves and shade, but no life or truth or blessing, and they have had a curse.

[84] Revelation 2:5

Many a church that once was a citadel of truth and of blessing, has become nothing more than a monument to a disobedient people because of the people leaving their first love. A. J. Gordon wrote of this one time. He said, "Ecclesiastical corpses lie all about us. The caskets in which they repose are lined with satin, and are decorated with solid silver handles, and abundant flowers, and like other caskets they are just large enough for their occupants, with no room for strangers. These churches have died of respectability, and have been embalmed in self-complacency. If by the grace of God this church is alive, be warned to use your opportunity or the feet of them that buried thy sisters will be at the door to carry thee out." And we look at our generation and see the monuments to a disobedient people, and realize the danger of leaving the first love.

But now notice this 7th verse in closing. "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."[85] Whatever the church may do, the individual Christian is always exhorted and enabled to overcome if he is willing to do it. I could not say what any church will do, what this church, The Gospel Tabernacle, will do. But I know this, that if everybody in the company does what he/she ought to do but you, as far as you are concerned nothing has happened. And if nobody does anything but you, if you meet God on His terms, as far as you are concerned everything has happened. And the Lord Jesus Christ now has left it as a possibility to you. The Spirit is speaking to the churches, and if you have an ear, you hear. Why should you wait for someone else?

Notice. To him that overcometh. To him that overcometh. This speaks of battle and of strife. Are you in it? Are you in this thing for a battle? Are you engaged as in a life and death struggle? Are you prepared to recognize yourself for what you

[85] Revelation 2:7

are? And deal with yourself as He commands? If you are, then He says, "I will give to him to eat of the Tree of Life." If you have been dealing with your problems and yourself, if you have been honest and facing the needs of your heart, if you have been fair in judging your failure, then I know that there is a hunger in your heart. The only one who is really hungry for God is the one who has been honestly dealing with himself. This is why so frequently revival must begin with confession. Because, when people begin to see how wrong they are, they begin to realize how unable they are to be what they ought to be by themselves. Now, if everyone in this room tonight would confess every sin that grieves the Head of the Church who with flame of fire sees your heart, and you would break before God and set everything right that needs be put right, confess everything that needs be confessed, and do it honestly and thoroughly and completely, I know this. There would be such a wave of hunger sweep over us, that you would be night and day crying out for God to meet you in terms of your deep spiritual need, your deepest need. It is not until you become absolutely, transparently honest with your own conscience and heart, that you become hungry. Until you deal with yourself to overcome, there will be no desire to eat. But notice; you are to eat of the Tree of Life.

The Bible begins with the Tree of Life, in the Garden. It closes with the Tree of Life, in Revelation. There is a Tree of Life in Heaven. But what tree is this? Where is the Tree of Life? The Tree of Life is just a Heavenly name for the Cross. For all life for man springs from the Cross. And those in the Old Testament looked ahead to the Tree that was to come, and those in the New Testament looked back to the Tree that was placed midway in history. When we get to Heaven we will gather there and see that out of the Cross every manner of blessing has come to feed those that in the earth have come to it

for their salvation. And He will give you to eat of the Tree of Life.

Oh the victory that has been accomplished at the Cross. If He spared not His own Son, but at the Cross delivered Him up for us all, how will He not with Him freely give us all things. And every blessing that He has for time and for eternity is the fruit of the Tree of Life. It was provided by Jesus Christ on the Cross. And if you are prepared now to do battle with yourself and sin and temptation, and all the things that harass and hinder, you will have a hunger to eat of the Tree of Life and come to that Tree to take victory over yourself. Come to take the glorious provisions of His grace, to know the fullness of the Spirit, and to enter into that which was provided and made possible there at the Cross, where that rugged gibbet became the Tree of Life.

Every blessing that God could design for men came from the wounded Lamb who on that Cross shed His blood and died. And so to you the Spirit says, "Let him that hath an ear hear." Do you have an ear? Do you hear? Have you seen your heart? Have you seen your need? Then brokenly come to Him. Confess. Repent and confess, and take forgiveness through the shed Blood, and take victory through your union with Christ, and take the fullness of the Spirit which was indeed the fruit of the Tree of Life.

This is the victor's food. All that Jesus Christ could provide for us at the Cross. Remember the Cross is but the earthly name for yonder Tree in Heaven by which all of God's grace is brought to men. I speak to someone here that has never known forgiveness, unsaved. You come to that Cross and see Christ died for you, and take Him, and with Him life. I speak to some child of God that has left his first love and fallen into sin. I say come to the Cross, and see the wounded side of the Son of God,

that fountain of cleansing. "If you confess your sin, He is faithful and just to forgive you your sin, and cleanse you from all unrighteousness."[86]

I speak to someone who is weary with the awful tyrannous assault and dictatorship of your own self. Come to the Cross, and there take deliverance by taking your place crucified with Christ. I speak to someone who is hungry for the fullness of God. Come to the Cross and see where the Lord Jesus Christ died, that you might have the joy of having Him live in you His own Life. It is all the fruit of the Tree of Life.

Have you come? Whatever your need is, come. Let us bow in prayer.

What a wonderful revelation of the Head of the Church thou dost give us here, our Father. He holds the stars, the servants, the ministers in His hands. He walks in the midst of the candlesticks. And He commends us for everything that He can see that in any wise is done for His glory, not even overlooking the cup of water that is given in His name. And then He faithfully deals with that particularly thing that grieves Him. It must be dealt with in order that He can bless us. He gives the solemn warning, and then He gives us such loving entreaty, for He wants to bless us, not to hurt us.

Oh Father, might there be a breaking up of our hearts today in the revelation of Christ, and realize that that tree of Calvary became the Tree of Life that bears all manner of fruits. For everyone that has any need finds in Jesus Christ the full provision. Grant Lord tonight that one that is here without thee, has never known joy or peace and forgiveness, will come. Grant, Heavenly Father, that Christian who has left his first love, fallen into sin, will come to overcome sin and temptation.

[86] 1 John 1:9

Grant that one who wants deliverance will come to eat of identification and union with Christ. Grant that hungry heart shall come to take of the fullness of Christ. It is all at the Tree of Life. It is all in the finished work of thy Son. May it be that he that hath an ear will hear, and will come.

Now with our heads bowed and our eyes closed, has the Spirit of God spoken to some tonight in terms of your need, and you would indicate by upraised hand, "Yes, God has spoken to me." "He has shown me my need, and I am by this signifying that I have heard what He has said and will deal with what He has shown me, and I want to register that I am saying "Yes" to the Lord." Would you raise your hand? God bless you. Yes. Yes, I see it. Someone else? My invitation is this. If you would like spiritual counsel and help, you remain and I will be so glad to talk with you. I will be glad to pray with you, to open the Word to you in any way that is possible to aid you. Now will you stand for the benediction.

And now unto Him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and honor, dominion and majesty, now and forever. Amen.

O for a closer walk with God

A calm and heavenly frame
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb!

Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?

Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His Word?

What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void

That world can never fill.

Return, O holy Dove, return

Sweet Messenger of rest!

I hate the sins that made thee mourn
And drove Thee from my breast.

The dearest idol I have known
Whate'er that idol be,

Help me to tear it from Thy Throne,

And worship only Thee

So shall my walk be close with God,

Calm and serene my frame

So purer light shall mark the road

That leads me to the Lamb.

William Cowper

The Victor's Life Crown

The message to the Church at Smyrna is found in Revelation Chapter 2, verses 8 to 11. We have called this the Victor's Life Crown. It is the third in the series of messages on the studies of the churches here in Revelation. A message that was dictated by the Lord Jesus to the Apostle John, for these churches that then were, and for us today.

I read the text: "And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried: and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."

Ephesus was the nearest city to Patmos. The next nearest was this of Smyrna. We find in the study of this Church at Smyrna that it was larger than all others, except the Church at Ephesus, that it was probably the most spiritually significant other than the Church at Ephesus. And so, we would then say that the Lord is writing to that church which is nearest to His heart, and has a message that is going to express to them appreciation for all they are and have, but also frank, open, honest declaration of that which grieves Him. The one that sees this church is the Lord Jesus whose eyes are as a flame of fire. The one that is speaking is none other than the Son of God. These things saith

the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive. All things are by Him. He sustains all things. He controls all things, and when as Peter has said all things are dissolved and rolled up as a scroll He will remain. And so He uses this word, the first and the last. We understand that it is the Lord Jesus Christ that is writing, the one of whom the Apostle John wrote saying, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made."[87] It is this one that is writing, "The Last." He controls, he sustains, and He governs. All things are not only by Him, but are for Him. And therefore He uses this name.

Then He also says, "The one which was dead, and is alive." You will find a little later in His message to this church that He is telling them that some of them will suffer persecution and perhaps even unto death. Therefore, He is prepared to identify Himself as the one which was dead. For God loved the world and gave His Son, but the world hated His Son, and gave Him up to the Cross, and slew Him and hanged Him on a tree, and He died, and He is alive. For the grave could not hold Him, and the bars of the tomb could not keep Him, and the seal of Pilate could not contain Him. He is alive. And He is the one, the one that has died and has been raised from the dead, that is the spokesman.

And the ones spoken to are the Church at Smyrna. This is an interesting church, in that Polycarp, who was a disciple of the Apostle John -- very possibly John served here for some years, Polycarp was very close to John. You understand, of course, that Polycarp is probably one of the most honored and revered of all of the sub-Apostolic witnesses for our Lord. He was brought before the governor there in Smyrna, was asked to

[87] John 1:1

renounce Christ and denounce the Gospel. He said for 80 and 6 years have I loved and served Jesus Christ. He has always been faithful to me, and I cannot deny Him now. And tradition has it, very well verified I am sure, that Polycarp was then placed in the red hot chair that was held for heretic Christians. And all Christians were heretic according to the laws of Rome. And this man, 86 years a Christian, probably much older than that, was taken to it and thrown in upon it, and was there burned to death.

In 400 A.D. that is in the 5th Century there were over two thousand Christian martyrs in the city of Smyrna. And thus our Lord does well to identity Himself as the one that was dead and is alive. Unto the angel of the Church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive.

What things? What is He saying? What is the message that He gives. I want you to see those first two words in the 9th verse: "I know." I know. If I had nothing more to say from this text tonight than this word of comfort to every Christian, I would have a message from God. For Jesus Christ, the first and the last, the one that was dead and is now alive, says, "I know." He is intimately acquainted with every experience through which His children pass. And this is that which He wishes this church to understand. "I know." I know thy works. He has seen their testimony, their labor of love, and their faithful service as they have stood for Him, as they have turned from idols to serve Him. I know thy works. I know what it has cost you to leave off the worship of the idols. I know the cost.... how you have been ostracized from family and friends, how your businesses have been taken from you, how you have been hated because you refused to continue in the vile worship that characterized the idolatry of the day. I know. I know your works. I know the things that you have done for me. I know your tribulation:

Every heartache, all the grief through which you have passed, all the agony of spirit that you have endured. I know.

I know your poverty. I know how they have deprived you of a living, how they have forbidden you to labor, how they have refused to let you work. I know what it has cost you to stand for it, to stand for me. I know. I suppose all of us have been moved by the fact that the family in New Orleans, that insisted that their child go to school in the integrated school, even though in government, work had such awful pressure put upon them that they had to leave the city of New Orleans and go back to New England. I am sure that all of us are aware of the fact that here was a family that stood for something, believed something, and were prepared to pay the financial price of sacrifice that it would bring. I wonder if the Lord Jesus Christ could look at you today and say, "I know your works, I know your tribulation." "I know your poverty for my sake and the Gospel." How much has it cost you to serve the Lord? How much has it involved you in to serve Him!

I sometimes feel greatly stricken, and smitten, when I think of my generation of which I am all too much a part. I will never forget the words of that Communist, spoken to a pastor friend down in Anderson, South Carolina. When he asked this man that formerly had been a member of his church, but now was exceedingly active in Communist activities there and carried his card as a member of the Communist Party... He said, "Why is it that you have done this?" The man looked at him and said, "I'll tell you why, because I lost confidence in the church." He said, "Jesus Christ died on a cross and you preachers are living off of it." And every time I think of that, my heart is smitten within me.

I wonder if you and I today are prepared to put ourselves against the future? We think of the agony through which our

brethren are passing in China, and what it is costing them to stand for the Lord Jesus Christ. I am sure of them, as He looks down and sees some of them that have suffered the loss of goods, family, yes even their life, He can say, I know thy works. I know thy tribulation. I know thy poverty. He does know it. And there ought to be great comfort to you who have suffered for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. And there ought to be great encouragement to all of us that may have to face such a future, for we do not know what it holds. Isn't it true we do not know what the future holds, but we do know who holds the future. And we realize that He has indicated to this church that there has not been a slur, there has not been an expression of hatred, there has not been a denunciation, there has not been a depriving them of a single privilege, but that He saw it. He knows. I know. I know thy works. I know thy tribulation. I know thy poverty.

But then notice what He says, "But thou art rich." Thou art rich. Here we have material poverty with spiritual riches. They have loved the Lord, even to the cost of that which was precious and real. A friend was telling me of his experience in trying to buy a watch here in the city from a Christian friend who ran a jewelry store. And the man said, "Now, I won't charge you the tax. There is a federal tax, but I won't charge it." He said, "Why not?" "Oh," he said, "I have to meet my competition and nobody pays that. We get around it." My friend looked at him and said, "Well, either I'll pay the tax and you turn it over to the government, or I won't take your watch." Here was a man that said, "Well, I've got to stay in business." I do not believe that, dear friend. I have never had to face it in terms of business. I have had to face it in other areas. But I firmly believe that a man ceases to be a man, or a woman a woman in her own eye, or in his own eyes, the moment that they let material consideration stand in the way of faithfulness to Jesus Christ. I know thy works. I know thy tribulations. I know thy poverty

endured for my sake. There is no virtue in poverty. No virtue in poverty. But the virtue lies in the fact that one is willing to suffer being defrauded of his goods for the sake of Jesus Christ. There is no virtue in being persecuted, unless it is for righteousness sake. He said, "If you endure graciously when you are persecuted for the things you have done wrong, what virtue is that? It is when you have done right and are persecuted that your patience is of spiritual value."[88]

And here is a church that stood firmly and completely and wholly for the Lord Jesus Christ, has taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods, has experienced material poverty, but has been spiritually enriched. But what do we find here in this latter part of the 9th verse? He said, "I know. I know something else. I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan." Here was religious profession, with spiritual poverty. First you had material poverty with spiritual riches. And here you have religious profession with spiritual poverty. Outwardly they were Jews. Outwardly they were religious. But inwardly they were ravening wolves; the same kind of attitude that characterized those that cried, "Crucify Him," also cried, "Crucify anyone that follows Him."

And here were a people that were persecuting the Church. Probably they were those that had the ministry of Paul, for he was in the area and had ministered here. He had gone into their synagogues. He had preached the Gospel. Some of these that are in the Church at Smyrna had been Jews in the synagogue. They have come out. And now persecution has risen up against them by those that say they are Jews. But you see he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, but he that is one inwardly. It is the circumcision of the heart, not just of the

[88] 1 Peter 2:20

flesh.[89] And so the Lord Jesus Christ said, "These people say they are the custodians of the Oracles of God. They say they are those who have the truth. No. I know them. They are outwardly Jews, but inwardly they are not." Viciously they vilify the Lord Jesus Christ, denounce and persecute the Christians -- this characterized their attitude. Christ said of them, "They are of the synagogue of Satan." This does not mean that they had a building dedicated to Satan, but it means that they had concocted blasphemies and planned assaults upon the children of God as an assembly of people who were working out the plan of Satan. It was Satan that stirred up persecution against the Church. The Jews, however, here in Smyrna were his willing tools. The pagan authorities, the Roman government officials were incited and worked up by them to cast the Christians into prison and bring them under persecution. This is what the Lord Jesus says. I know. I know you that love me and trust me, and I know those that have persecuted you and raised up trouble against you and difficulty for you. I know all of these things.

I wonder if this truth has ever reached your heart. You know when things begin to go wrong with a person; it is so easy to feel, "Well God has just turned His back on me. His eyes are closed toward me. He has forgotten me." But do you hear what He says? I know. I know the experiences through which you have passed. I witnessed everything that has been said, everything that has been done.

The Scripture makes it perfectly clear that under no circumstance is a Christian ever to try and vindicate himself or to revenge himself. I'll explain why. And you notice He indicates by what He does not say that this church was not doing either. They were not vindicating, nor were they

[89] Romans 2:28-29

endeavoring to bring revenge. They were simply standing there, committing their case to Him that is faithful. Now to tell you why. If you vindicate yourself, you use up any virtue that you may have had in the vain fruitless effort of trying to prove your innocence. There is nothing left, when you have done that. Because you have become so guilty in the effort to vindicate your innocence, that your guilt -- the guilt at the end is greater than the innocence you proved at the first. And I have said frequently in the past, "No use to explain," says the Spirit of God to the child of God because your enemies won't take it, and your friends do not need it. And consequently, this church was perfectly willing to leave their case in the hands of Him who knew. He knew their works. He knew their tribulation. He knew their poverty. And He knew all about the other. Now we say that because in just a little while later we are going to find that He sees something in them, and He knows what is wrong with them also, but here He sees what is right.

"Fear none of these things which thou shalt suffer." They are going to suffer. They are going to suffer; this Church at Smyrna is going to be persecuted as few have been. Now what have we so far? Well, we have material poverty with spiritual riches, and we have religious profession with spiritual poverty, and now we have a commendation given by Christ without any censor at this point. The Lord is entirely pleased with this church so far, up to this point. And He is fortifying the church for what is yet to come. He is saying; "Everything is in my hands. I am the first and the last. I know what has been and is to be. I am the one who has the ability to say to you, "Do not ever be afraid of the future, because I know it." And if I ask you to pass through it, I will be with you in it." And then He says, "I am the one which was dead, and is alive." I can carry you even through death into life. This is the one that writes to this Church.

"Behold," says He, "the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." As we have had commendation without censor, we now have a prophecy concerning persecution with encouragement. You say, "What does this have to do with me?" In your lifetime, if you are as old as I am, -- 40, 42 -- and many of you are. Others of you are much older. But in my lifetime, I know that at least according to the figures that were published by the department - by the government - there were some eight million people, Christian people, in Russia that died for no greater crime than that they loved Jesus Christ. Now these figures are old, back in the late '30's. I have not seen any other figures since then. And we are told by the government itself that in China there have been twenty million that have been "deprived of existence" during the last ten years, and a great many of these for no other crime than that they have loved Jesus Christ. This world is no friend of grace, and no friend of Christ.

I do not know what may happen in my lifetime and yours. I do not know, and I am not going to hazard a prophecy concerning it. But I do know this that two thirds of the world now is under a governmental system which is antithetically opposed to everything for which we stand, and for which the Gospel stands. For atheistic Communism has never ceased to be atheistic, and never ceased to have hatred for those that love Christ. And, consequently, the facts are there. The world is before you. You are in it. You are part of it. I do not know what the future holds for any of us. But I do know this, that there is an appropriateness to what Christ is saying here, as perhaps there has seldom been to any other decade, and quite as clear a measure as there is tonight for us. Let me read it to you. "Fear none of these things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried: and ye

shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee the crown of life."

The Lord Jesus knows exactly what will happen to the people. Some of you shall be cast into prison. They did not know which of them it would be, but He did. They did not know when it would happen, but He did. All they knew was that He said, "Some of you shall be cast into prison." They did not know why it was going to happen, but He did: "That ye may be tried." "The trial of your faith is much more precious than gold that perisheth."[90] This does not mean they were going to be tried in a pagan court, even though this thought lies somewhere underneath the surface. The verb is to be "completely tried." This is so the evidence of the genuineness of their faith in Christ can be exhibited. He wants to have it seen by all that what He has done is real.

I would recommend that in connection with the message this evening you read again the Book of Job. Frankly, I think that the Book of Job is the oldest Book in the Bible, and it is written for an express purpose. You see, Satan's argument to God was, "The only reason Job serves you is because you bless him." In other words, he is motivated by selfishness. "And if you will let me touch him, I will prove to you that grace does not do anything for people. I will prove to you that the human heart is corrupt, and is incapable of any change." This is the argument that Satan presents to God. And God turns about and says to him, "All right. You can touch him. Touch his things, but not him." And you know what happens? There is the destruction at his property, his herds, his flocks. And finally he says, "Well if you would let me touch him, then he would curse you." And his children are taken, and finally his body is touched with boils. And Job now is there with all possessions gone, with his

[90] 1Peter 1:7

family gone, with his wife saying, "Curse God and die." And his friends sitting about and looking at him, saying, "The reason that you are in trouble is because you have sinned." And Job, searching his heart before God, says, "I don't know where I have sinned. I don't know any reason for it. And I am not going to be hypocrite and confess to sins of which I am not guilty, just to please you. I'll sit here." "Though He slay me, yet am I going to trust Him."[91] I am not going to do it. I am going to stand on the grounds that I have sought to serve the Lord with all my heart, and here boils or no boil, dearth or no dearth, loss or no loss... And he sits there. And then the arguments that comprise those many chapters of the Book of Job, and finally Job sees the Lord, and of course there is wrought in his heart a great breaking, a great humility. "I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee. And I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."[92] But the fact is that Job did not curse God. There was a trial of faith. I believe this is the oldest Book of the Bible because it was God's answer to Satan, saying that when grace works a miracle in the heart, that miracle is of enduring quality, and nothing can change it. I believe that.

Now I believe that this is the reason why we have persecution even unto death in Revelation. It begins, does the Bible, and ends with the same thing, that when God performs a miracle on the human heart they are willing to stand with the loss of all things and to the suffering of all grief and agony. They are going to stand for Jesus Christ. This is what we have. I am allowing you to go into this experience. Satan is the one that has originated it. The same one that tried unsuccessfully with Job is going to cast some of you into prison. And I am going to allow this to happen in order that you may be completely tried,

[91] Job 13:15
[92] Job 42:5-6

and the genuineness of my work in your heart can be demonstrated. How long is it going to last? And ye shall have tribulation ten days. I do not think it has reference to ten days in the literal sense, but ten days in the sense of a complete period. It is going to go on until it is completed, until everything that I have purposed for it is wrought. Everything that I have intended by it is accomplished. Actually the duration is not, in my mind, revealed here. I think this ten days could have included the death of Polycarp in 66 A.D. (71 years after John wrote this in 95 A.D.) Ten days to me means a complete period. I am going to allow you to be tried until the trial has done everything I have purposed for it. If you wish, I will even extend those ten days onto the 5th century when, as I have said, two thousand died for Christ in the city of Smyrna.

But you know something? I wonder if those ten days are completed. Five is the number of grace. And this is the day of grace. And I think that as long as there is God's open door to sinners there is going to be Satan's attack upon saints. As long as Jesus Christ says, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden,"[93] there will be the enemy saying, "If you do, you will die." I believe that. I do not expect the time will ever come when the Word will be altered which says, "They that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."[94] Are you prepared to undergo this that this church heard?

If I am tonight speaking, and I do not claim to be by any means, but were I speaking to you as John did speak to the Church at Smyrna, what would be your attitude? If you knew that you were going to be cast into prison, that you were going to suffer, you were going to be tried, you would have tribulation ten days, and some of you would die, what would you do about it?

[93] Matthew 11:28
[94] 2 Timothy 3:12

What would you do if I were to say to you that in your future is a prison cell. What would you do with Jesus Christ if I were to say to you, "Now listen! In your future is a Cross." What would you say?

I have told you of that company of Christians during the last ten years to whom the authorities came, laid a cross on the ground and said, "If you will walk on it you will live." All they had to do was step on the cross, and walk across it to the other end, and they were free. But if you don't... For under the cross and on it were Bibles… And if they would walk on the Bible, and step on the cross, they could go free. There was a bridge to their own deliverance. But the one that escaped and came out to Hong Kong said that there were one hundred and fifty crosses raised for men who refused to step on it. What would be your reply if this were addressed to you? It could be very well, you know.

Is it not interesting that our Lord Jesus shows exactly what He wants His own believers to do in the face of this persecution? Notice what He does not say. He did not say, "Pray to be delivered from this prison; Pray to be delivered from this suffering; Pray to be delivered from this tribulation." Nor did He say, "Rail upon those that are condemning you, bitterly assail those that attack you, fight for your rights, demand protection, organize, unionize." These are things He does not say. None of these things are in His Word. What does He say? Be thou faithful unto death. Just stand. In Ephesians, the 6th Chapter, He says, "Take unto you the whole armour of God whereby ye shall be able to stand in the evil day and having done all, Stand." To stand. Just stand. Refuse to bend. Refuse to bow, Refuse to offer the pinch of incense to the altar of the Emperor. Refuse to take the oath that is going to compromise your Lord. Just stand.

Now, death is not the only evidence of faithfulness to Christ. The Lord seems to want only a limited number of martyrs. It may not be your privilege to go to see Him by means of a martyrs' death. Sometimes one wonders in that precious moment, if there would not be as there seemed to be in the history of martyrdom through *Foxes' Book of Martyrs*, given by the Spirit of God, a great exaltation at the privilege of dying for Christ. I wonder sometimes whether it would not be harder to live for Christ. When Mr. Adeney was here last week, he was saying that some of the young people at the Chinese Fellowship that afternoon had said that the experience through which Christians in China are passing now is infinitely harder than that through which they passed under the Roman Empire two thousand years ago, because this is a persecution against the mind. This is pressure on the human spirit. This is subtle. The other was direct, and open, and physical. And the Lord Jesus demands faithfulness…In whatever measure of tribulation He allots to us in order to try us. And our attitude during this tribulation, what is it?

In Luke the 6th Chapter, the 28th verse, we hear Him say, "Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you." And commit the keeping of your soul, to Him that is faithful. Turn it over to Him. This is what He commands. Keep on becoming faithful. Keep on proving faithful, even unto death. Be ye faithful unto death. Keep on proving yourself faithful.

Why? Well you see He says, "The crown of life will only be given to those who prove themselves faithful." This word crown is an interesting word. You have heard the name Stephen. Well the word Stephen means crown. It comes from the Greek word, stephanos. And the stephanos is a crown used to mark out royalty; it is a crown worn by a king. Remember what we read in Revelation 1:5-6, "Unto Him that loved us, and

washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God." And so He says, "Keep on proving your faithfulness until you have received that crown that signifies that you are indeed a king; made to be a king."

Perhaps it did not impress you; but this has been a very interesting week to us -- Mrs. Reidhead and I being missionaries in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, and having such close friends in Ethiopia for so many years. We are vitally interested in the fact that this little man, Haile Selassie[95], that was driven out of his country by the invasion by Italy, some 20 years ago, should now have a coup and attempt to drive him out of his country by his own son.

We were strangely moved when we read that Haile Selassie's son had organized a coup against him and was endeavoring to take the throne from him. But you know something. Here is a man who trusts God. Here is a man that loves Jesus Christ. Here is a man that has trusted Him for many years. During his years of exile in England, he had a faithful witness. Throughout these many years he has been a close friend to those who have known and loved our Savior. And somehow with a little man, not very tall, not very imposing, there seems to be a dignity that would thwart this, would hinder it. And we were all, that knew him and knew what pressures he has withstood, what efforts he has put forth in behalf of his country, certainly were praying for him, and for the interests of the Gospel that he represented. And he has done his very best to promote and maintain it there.

But he wears the crown well, one of the few absolute monarchies left. I do not know whether I should be in favor of that or not. The thing I am in favor of is that here is a man that

[95] Haile Selassie (1892-1975) Ethiopia's regent from 1916 to 1930 and Emperor of Ethiopia from 1930 to 1974

has bowed his knee to the King Jesus, the Lord Jesus Christ, and humbly testifies that he is trusting not in the ritual or the rite of the Coptic Church, but he is trusting in the shed blood of Jesus Christ for the salvation of his soul. He wears stephanos, the mark of a king.

Now there is going to be every pressure of Hell put against you to dethrone you, to get you to renounce Jesus Christ, to get you out from the position to which He has exalted you. You who were the least of all saints, you who were the chief of sinners, you who were the off scouring of all things, you who deserve nothing but His wrath. The Lord Jesus Christ loved you, and was made to be sin for you, and died your death, and raised you not only to forgiveness and pardon, but to be a joint heir with Him. And when He sat down on that Throne, you sat there with Him. For unto Him that loved us, and washed us in His blood, and made us to be kings and priests unto God. And now the enemy is going to come and try to get you to cast aside your inheritance in Christ, and get you to renounce the Lord Jesus, and give up your crown. And He said, "Be thou faithful." Continually prove your faithfulness, for I will give thee the mark of royalty, a stephanos, a crown.

Paul sought this. You listen to the testimony of the Apostle, and you hear him say, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall give me at that day and not to me only but unto all them also that love His appearing."[96] Where did Paul go at the conclusion of his Ephesians epistle - or his epistle to Timothy rather? Where did he go? Outside of the city gate, as tradition tells us, with a little group of Christians following

[96] 2 Timothy 4:6-8

the band of soldiers that escorted him, and there he knelt, not being given the dignity as some have thought of dying in the Colosseum, but dying outside the city, a place of squalor and filth and darkness. And there he died, his head severed from his body by the one swing of the sword in the hands of the executioner. But what is it he said, "There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

Then there is this exhortation to the Church, but more than that, there is an exhortation to the individual. He says to the entire Church, "Be thou faithful." But then, in the conclusion of this wonderful letter to the Church, He said, "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." There is an individual call which Jesus Christ put to each believer. He that hath an ear, let him hear. The Church is, of course, made up of individuals. And the Church will only obey Christ as each individual obeys Him. However, there are some churches that may fail. Every individual in such a church that will, need not to be carried by it.

It is often a very lonely thing to go with Jesus Christ. "Come out from among them and be ye separate."[97] Go outside the camp, bearing His shame, and His ignominy, His disgrace. A church many times finds it wise and profitable in their own lights, and in their own judgment to repudiate Christ and His Word, and slip and slide and skid pass the issue to the point of no return. And of course, the only way that such a church can possibly justify it is to prove that everyone else is wrong, just as the Pharisees could deal with Jesus Christ on only one of two bases. They either had to seek what He taught, or kill Him. And if you are in such a church and you do not go with the group, then you are going to be ostracized, and they will have

[97] 2 Corinthians 6:17

to turn on you. If there is a law against killing, they will use some other means. But the issue is always the same. We trust the church will stand. But if the church will not, you must. Do you see? If the church won't, you must. It is not, "My country right or wrong." Abraham Lincoln was asked, "Let's have a day of prayer in order that we may ask God to come on our side." He said, "We don't need that. We can't get God on our side. There is only one reason for a day of prayer, and that is that we can find out what God's side is and get on it with Him." And so it would be with you. God is not going to be moved because the group is moved. He is almost never with the throng. Almost always is the Lord Jesus alone. And so frequently when our thinking is colored for us by the group thinking it is wrong thinking.

I remember so often hearing Dr. Moyer[98] in Northwestern Bible School in Minneapolis saying, "Truth is not what you have been taught." What you have been taught may be true, but it is not true because you were taught it. And there must be a constant reference to the Book. This Book is not true because I say it is. It is true because it is true. You do not judge the Book by what I say. You judge me by what the Book says." And there must be this constant unchangeable standard.

Truth is not where the Church is. This was the ancient heresy of Rome. And Luther said it well: "The Church is where truth is." Well now, when the Church leaves the truth, and you stand with the truth, you may stand alone. But the Scripture says, "He that hath an ear to hear what the Spirit says unto the churches." You stand with the Spirit of God. You stand with the Word of God. You stand with the Son of God, for whatever the Spirit says, the Son says. Both Christ and the Spirit deliver the message. The Holy Spirit in the prophet is the interpreter

[98] Dr. Robert Moyer-Professor at Northwestern Bible School

and enforcer of Christ's words. And so what the Spirit says is what Christ says. What does He say? He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death. He that overcometh. He that overcometh. This is the call that He has made with promise of life. You are not to be intimidated by poverty. You are not to be threatened by the confiscation of your goods. You are not to be discouraged by tribulation. You are not to be hindered by persecution. Even death itself is not to stop you in your firm testimony for Jesus Christ.

What does this mean? He that overcometh. He that meets intimidation. He that meets confiscation. He that meets tribulation. He that overcomes persecution. He that endures martyrdom. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death. I believe that the second death speaks of damnation in eternal Hell. I believe of eternal loss of the never dying soul. This morning we spoke of apostasy and the danger of it. And the Lord Jesus Christ writes to the Church of Smyrna and He says, "Listen." The synagogue of Satan over which Satan himself presides, using evil men, are going to try to divert you, and allure you, and press you and drive you and entice you. Every pressure that the evil genius of Hell can possibly conjure up is going to be exerted upon you to get you to leave the Son of God. But he that overcometh shall not be hurt by the second death, shall escape hell, shall have eternal life.

But who is it that overcomes? John tells us in his epistle, and gives us this word. What an encouraging word it is. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world. And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world? He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God."[99] Have you believed that Jesus is the Son of God? Have you committed to Him your possessions? Have you

[99] 1 John 5:4-5

committed to Him your future? Have you committed to Him your life? To believe is to commit.

You have heard the illustration so often; I believe in this chair. And there it is. Well why don't you sit down on it? Well I'm afraid it won't hold me. I believe it's a chair. I believe others have sat on it, and I believe if I sat on it, it would hold me. You do not believe on that chair until you commit yourself to it, and you do not believe on Jesus Christ until you commit yourself to Him, not only all that you have to Him, but all that He demands you commit to Him. And all that He has committed to you, you receive from Him. This is what it means to believe.

Who is he that overcomes? He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God. The first and the last, the one that was dead and is now alive. What will this commitment involve? We pointed out to you today in the morning study that it involves the pledge of absolute purity, absolute truth, absolute unselfishness, and absolute love. Surely these are the terms of commitment that He demands. And then to live your life with an eye single to His glory. You commit your past sins to Him as He died for you, and shed His blood for you. You commit your future to Him even though He allows you to go into tribulation and persecution, suffering even martyrdom. It is in His hands and in His purpose. All the past is committed to the one that is the first. All the future is committed to the one that is the last. And Jesus Christ is Lord of all. Oh what a church was the Church at Smyrna. He did not have one thing to hold against it, not one indictment to level. He is pleased, perfectly pleased with this church.

I wonder tonight is He perfectly pleased with me? With you? Certainly the deep desire of our hearts, if we have committed our lives to Him is to please Him, perfectly, perfectly. And you are here tonight unsaved. I would sin against your soul if I

were to imply that to believe on Jesus Christ is to get on a merry-go-round for a few years of a happy lark. It is more than that. If I were to suggest to you that it does not cost to be a Christian, that just because Jesus paid it all there is nothing that is going to be exacted from you, I would be utterly dishonest with you. I tell you this, sinner friend, if you come to Jesus Christ it is going to cost you everything. It cost Him everything. It is going to cost you everything. First, it means the dethroning of yourself, and the enthroning of Christ, the renunciation of yourself, and the consecration to Christ, the commitment to Him as Lord and as Savior. Secondly, it involves the giving to Him of all you possess and the abandoning to Him of all your future, commitment to Him of your life, and obedience to Him in the face of opposition, and criticism, and Satanic attempt to dissuade and divert you. Oh, beloved, it costs everything to be a Christian.

But I want to tell you one thing else. It's worth everything. It is worth everything to be a Christian, to have Jesus Christ living in you. I read it again. "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."[100]

From a wonderful Savior. Is He yours? Do you know Him? Do you love Him? Do you trust Him? Does He have all because He is worthy of all? Are you saying as did Paul, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that

[100] Revelation 2:9-11

which I have committed unto Him against that day."[101] Let us bow in prayer.

Oh God, our Father, we hear the Son of God speak tonight as He spoke before saying, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth."[102] In our hymns and in our carols we shall sing, "Peace," over and over again. And we know there is only peace through thy dear Son who died and shed His blood. But He said, "I came not to send peace, but to send a sword." "A man's foes shall be they of his own household."[103] "Whosoever will save his life will lose it. Whosoever will lose his life for my sake and the Gospel will save it."[104] This is the message thy Son gave us, and we give the world ….That it costs everything to follow Him. But it is worth everything, because He is alive from the dead. Oh might there be someone here today that would say, Yes, Yes, I want Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, someone good enough, worthy enough, holy enough, so that I can live for Him, and if need be die for Him. Someone that can enable me to be all that I would be, that He would have me be, someone that is wise enough to tell me what to be and strong enough to enable me to be it. I need Jesus Christ. Might there be someone here of that heart and spirit tonight, to whom thou art speaking, that thou wilt call to thy Son.

Everyone here that profess faith in Him, Oh God, help us to realize we are either of this sort or we too are of the synagogue of Satan, with a "Name to live, but being dead."[105] Oh Father, let it not be so. But let there be here, this evening a company of committed men and women who are willing to live for the Lord Jesus Christ at whatever cost, to the despoiling of their

[101] 2 Timothy 1:12
[102] Matthew 10:34
[103] Matthew 10:36
[104] Matthew 16:25
[105] Revelation 3:1

goods, to poverty, to tribulation, even to death, to live for Him, even to die for Him. Might we be such a people. Lord, the world is only changed by dedicated, committed people. Might there be such commitment tonight, found in our hearts, as we bring to Him the gift He asks, the abandonment of everything to Him. Might He see of the travail of His soul in and for us, and be satisfied.

With our heads bowed, and eyes closed, are there those who would say by upraised hand, "Pray for me. God has spoken to my heart, and I find that I have not committed my life to Him, but tonight I would, and I do. In just such terms as you have outlined, I want to indicate by my upraised hand that tonight I am committing my life wholly to Jesus Christ on these terms." Would you put your hand up and take it down again? I see it, and God bless you. Anyone else? Anywhere?

Let us stand for the benediction. (I invite the one whose hand has been raised and others who may be here with spiritual need, desiring consultation and prayer, to remain behind in your seat and I will come to you shortly and talk with you and pray with you, and help in any way we can.) Father, drive thy Word deep into our hearts, burn it upon us; let the message that thou didst give to the Church at Smyrna encourage us that whatever the future may hold, thou dost hold it and us in it, and thy purpose is only our dross to remove and the gold to refine. And so, Father, we pray that thy Word may be a salve to the wounded, and a rebuke to the disobedient, and a comfort to the assailed. Whatever the need may be, let thy Word be that to us, and in and through it all being glory to Jesus Christ for His name's sake. Amen.

The Victor's Life Secret

Will you turn, please, to Revelation the 2nd Chapter. His power and His glory we shall proclaim. I shall read, beginning with the 12th verse through the 17th verse, as we prepare to consider this, the third of the seven churches, the Church at Pergamos.

"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith He which hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my Name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."

Tonight we are studying a city church. This was the Church at Pergamos. This is a city church here in the heart of the city, one block from Times Square. The reason that the Gospel Tabernacle Church is located at 8th Avenue is that Dr. Simpson[106] in that day desired to be in the midst of the people

[106] Albert Benjamin Simpson (1843-1919) founder of The Christian and Missionary Alliance

that he considered had the greatest need. You might be interested to know that the Gospel Tabernacle Church was at one time located on Fifth Avenue at 42 Street. But it was too far from the center of the population of need. And so, he moved just these three blocks to the west and put the church here because he wanted to be among the immigrants that were coming in from Germany and Italy, and Southern Europe, for he felt that here he had the place of greatest opportunity of ministry.

Every man is the product, not only of the influences of home and school, but also of the influences of men that he has admired and been influenced by. I suppose if you were to have met young Timothy and then the older Timothy, as the years went on, you would never have been able to have disassociated him from Paul. Someone said about our beloved Dr. Brown[107] that he was best understood if you knew the two men that had influenced him the most. The one was Dr. A. B. Simpson, and the other was Paul Rader[108]. And thus you could find the man by those whom he had admired, and from whom he had learned.

And this would be true of me, I am sure. I recall so well coming from the farm in 1935 to the city of Minneapolis, to Northwestern Bible School, then associated with the First Baptist Church of Minneapolis, at 11th and Harmon Place, on block -- just between H and N. Now this does not mean anything to you unless you have been there. It was right downtown, in the city of Minneapolis. Now of course Minneapolis was the capital of the world, my world, at the time. The whole world revolved around it. It was the one fixed point, and all the other things had to revolve around it. Now,

[107] Robert Roger Brown (1885-1964) Pastor and Radio Evangelist
[108] Daniel Paul Rader (1878-1938) was an influential evangelist in the Chicago area during the early 20th century and was America's first nationwide radio preacher

the important thing was Dr. Riley[109] had believed firmly in the city church. There was after about 10 years of his ministry a serious split in which about one half to a third of the church left to go out to the hills, to build a beautiful monument to one class of society some distance from the center of the city. There were those who believed in a continuing testimony there in the heart of the city. And thus it was that the early impressions as a young student were formed by contact with a man who believed in the center of city ministry and church. And thus, my being pastor in the Gospel Tabernacle Church and laboring here is not, I believe, accident but it is rather one of those things for which there would be years of preparation. I too, believe in the center of city ministry.

Now this was the church I say at Pergamos. Pergamos was a city located north of Smyrna. (We have just studied Smyrna previously.) It would be the next city in the logical progression from the Island of Patmos. It was a capital city and a cultural center. It had reached this state when it had finally become the, probably, literary center of Asia Minor. It had one of the most splendid libraries, in fact so splendid that when Mark Anthony came to the city as a Roman conqueror, he took the library and presented it as a gift to Cleopatra. Incidentally the word parchment with which you are familiar comes from the word Pergamos. It is a corruption of the word. It was a pagan cathedral city, a university town, and a royal residence. And thus our Lord says, "To the angel," or the pastor, the minister in the Church in Pergamos write. Christ has an interest in city churches. Strangely enough, when He sent His servant Paul to Asia Minor, he went directly to Corinth, to Athens, to the great Capital Cities. Water always flows from the highest point down, and the highest point culturally is the city.

[109] Rev. Dr. William Bell Riley (1861-1947) Pastor of the First Baptist Church, Minneapolis, MN. and educator

I was deeply impressed some years ago in securing a copy or an excerpt from the message by the man who was founder of Calvary Baptist Church in this city, and at his fifth anniversary as pastor of that church he wrote (And I do not quote exactly, but the substance.) "I count it a privilege to serve the Lord anywhere. But I would rather serve Him in the heart of New York City than anywhere else." And then he used very figurative language: Said, "Where New York sits like a Queen on her Island Throne, and draws to her the best and the worst that the world has to offer -- the best in brains, in talent, the worst in selfishness and sin. But they all come and kneel at her feet and leave such offerings as they are prepared to bring."

Now I sympathize with that. I feel our Lord Jesus Christ is particularly concerned about the city. You see Him as He over sits on the hill, the escarpment, or the little hill overlooking Jerusalem, and you hear the cry of His heart: "Oh Jerusalem! Jerusalem! How oft would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chickens, and ye would not."[110] Of what other community did our Lord ever speak this way, save that which was to the Jewish people the capital of the world? I believe that now as then the center of the city church holds the future of Christianity. I believe that there has been a disastrous pressure to suburbanize Christianity. And I think that it holds nothing but ill in the future, if fundamental, evangelical Christianity becomes associated with one class of society. It will be recognized as being merely another of the cultural phenomena. But only when the church is prepared to grow in alien ground can it demonstrate its divine origin and the supernatural power which enables and which strengthens it.

Now the one who speaks (Let us go back to the 12th verse): "To the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith

[110] Matthew 23:37

He which hath the sharp sword with two edges." It is a message from the glorified Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is speaking.

He is speaking in three capacities. First, He is speaking as Sovereign. You must not misunderstand this. He is not the meek and lowly Jesus who made His bed in a manger, and His home in a carpenter shop, and wandered without place to lay His head in the bypaths of Galilee. No longer is He the one that stands silent before Pilate. If you want a description of this one, you see Him here in these verses 12-17, in the first Chapter: "And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks, and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. (And John, the beloved Apostle who had leaned on Jesus' bosom said,) And when I saw Him I fell at His feet as dead." This is the glorified Christ that is speaking. This is the one of whom Heaven did answer, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye Him."[111] The writer of Hebrews said, "See that you refuse not Him that speaketh from Heaven."[112] He is speaking as sovereign.

He is speaking as a conqueror, for He said, "I am the one that was dead but am now alive, the one that was dead but liveth."[113] For He has met His enemies and submitted to all that

[111] Matthew 17:5
[112] Hebrew 12:25
[113] Revelation 1:18

they could do, but vanquished them. He led captivity captive. He is speaking as the one who will be sovereign over men and conquer men. If you will not submit to His sovereignty, if you will not submit to His conquest of your heart, if you will not fall upon this rock and be broken, then He speaks as judge.

Men will either face Him as sovereign to whom they readily submit all they are, or they will face Him as the judge who will say, "Away with you. I never knew you."[114] But He is now speaking, is this glorified Son.

His speech is symbolized by this figure, a two-edged sword. In Ephesians, the 6th Chapter and the 17th verse we read, "And take unto yourself the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." In Hebrews the 4th Chapter, and the 12th verse we read, "For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword." In Revelation, the 1st Chapter and the 16th verse I read, "And out of His mouth went a two-edged sword." Many times people go to church, looking for something that is going to smooth them, and soothe them, and comfort them when they do not need comfort and cannot expect it from an honest God. How true this is today. We find that the Scripture is being fulfilled when it says, "Men will not endure sound doctrine, but will heap to themselves teachers because they have itching ears that the teachers will scratch, and comfort."[115]

True preaching inevitably is God's Word spoken to the need of man, whatever that need may be. That one who would tremble at the faces of men, cannot think to be a servant of God, but can only be thought to be a servant of men. This is a two-edged sword that is to be wielded by the star that is held in His hand, by the angel in the Church, a two-edged sword. The one side of

[114] Matthew 7:23
[115] 2 Timothy 4:3-4

the sword cuts in conviction, cuts in the revelation of sin, in the disclosure of guilt, cuts in that which brings man to his knees in the presence of his God. But that same side of the sword which cuts also converts, for it divides between the soul and the spirit and it makes room for the entrance of God's grace. The other side of that sword condemns. If you will not summit to its convicting edge and to its converting edge, then you will have to submit to its condemning edge. It is indeed a two-edged sword.

I think the true child of God wants God's Word, regardless of what it may mean, regardless of what it may cost, regardless of how deeply it may cut. If you are a branch in the vine, you lay bare your breast, knowing that "faithful are the wounds of a friend,"[116] and knowing that His Word can only purge and only purify, that there shall be more fruit.

In reading about agriculture this past week, I have discovered that it is said that when some men would have their orchards pruned they do not stay on the premises because the pruning that is required is going to cut so deeply that the man who owns the orchard is going to cry out saying, Don't! Don't! You are taking too much! But I do not believe that this will characterize the child of God who truly loves Him and wants his life to glorify Him. He is going to lay bare his breast and say, "Cut, Lord, as deeply as I need." This is the one who speaks, the Son of God.

The speech of the Son of God next is followed by the seat of God's adversary. Notice what He says, "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is."[117] It is interesting that cities began with Cain's son. Cain slew Abel and was driven from the presence of God, and from his

[116] Proverbs 27:6
[117] Revelation 2:13

parents, out with his wife and family into the wilderness. Cain's son was Enoch, and the Scripture records that Enoch built a city. The first city was built by the son of the first murderer, and the first rebel. And seemingly in this there is something of the reason for it, in order that it might become a citadel in rebellion against God. Adam and Eve were given to prune the Garden and care for it, and perhaps we might well say that the most ideal life, if we could return to it, would be that of the farm, the subsistence farm, where one is producing what he eats and what he requires. But cities, nevertheless, are now very much a fixture, and we read that in 1970 there will probably be this megalocephalous from Boston down to Washington, D. C. and the rest of the seacoast with four or five great super-metropolitan areas.

Pergamos is declared by the Lord Jesus Christ, this capital city, this cultural center, to be Satan's seat. Now Jesus Christ knew Satan, knows all about him, and He knows that he had a geographical location out of which he worked and which he labored. Mr. Ward testified to something related from Africa, from that which we have learned and experienced regarding the activity of demons. It was Dr. Moseley[118], the former President of Nyack Missionary College now with the Lord, who told of going into a Tibetan hut where there was one that had never previously seen anyone from the western world, and there speaking in the language to a demon-possessed man and addressing the evil spirit who gave its name. This was the testimony that came through the one that was in a coma. "Where are the evil spirits?" said, Dr. Moseley. And the reply that came was, "They are all gone. Most of them have left." Well, why? "Well, way over where the sun sets there is a war going on." This Tibetan knew nothing of the World War in the Fields of Flanders. Nothing at all. But the evil spirit did. And

[118] Dr. Thomas Moseley (1886-1959) President of Nyack Missionary College.

they had been called away from Tibetan activity, these who were the ministers of darkness.

And thus it was that Jesus Christ knew all about Satan's activities. And He has given us this revelation. "And we know we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against the hierarchy of darkness."[119]

Now, Christ knows all about it, knows where it is, and He wants His Church (Now this is the significant thing)…The Lord Jesus Christ wants His Church right where He knows that Satan's seat is. You would say perhaps, "Well why did He not call His Church to some other sequester, quiet little brook side, where there they could have lived in pleasantness and without the conflict?" No. Jesus Christ wants a church right there. I believe that today Satan's seat is still in the metropolis. And I believe that the existence of the metropolis, even such as New York is first, spiritually speaking, an affront to and a challenge to the Church of God.

Some years ago when I read in the newspaper (was living in the South) that Rockefeller was buying a portion of land that was used by poor housing, substandard housing tenements, and turning it over to the United Nations for a home, I could not help but believe that the moving of world government to this city might change its spiritual character. And I am, having been here now for over four years, I am convinced that this is true, that very possibly if we could see as did the young man at Elijah's command, see the chariots and horsemen of God we would also discover that this city has, because of the international focus that it has acquired by this means, become Satan's seat. However, every city is in some sense a seat of

[119] Ephesians 6:12

Satan. And the strange thing is that in the last fifty to seventy-five years in America the heart of the cities have been surrendered to Satan. It is going on constantly. Now the heart of the city will determine the character of the city. It is the moral vantage point for which Hell contends and for which Jesus Christ contends. The weaker Christianity becomes, the more diluted it becomes; the more dissipated it becomes, the further it will flee from the center of the city. Because it is not going to have the moral stamina, nor the power, nor the presence of the risen Christ in that freedom that He needs in order to stand in the place of conflict. I believe that this is the vantage point.

An account is given to us of the Civil War, a regiment that was sent out to hold the hill. The battle had turned against them. And when, an officer came, he found just a tattered remnant of what had been once a very proud regiment. And there, as he rode up on his horse, he spoke to one of the non-commissioned officers and said, "Where is your captain?" And the sergeant pointed and said, "There he lies cold and dead." "Well, what are you doing here?" The sergeant looked up and said, "Our captain told us that this was a vantage point, and he said, Hold it or die. And officer, we are doing what our captain told us."

I personally believe that Jesus Christ is the Captain of our Salvation, and when He was here He gave us two commandments. He said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."[120] This is the world-wide extension of the Gospel. But He also said, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in the poor and the maimed and the halt and the blind."[121] Every argument that you would use for foreign missions, every argument that you

[120] Mark 16:15
[121] Luke 14:21

would prove that we should send the Gospel to darkest Africa will have equal effect in saying that the Gospel ought to go in darkest New York, and Chicago, and San Francisco.

I am convinced that Jesus Christ is the Lord of the Harvest and the field is the world; that when He said, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city," He was giving to us a commandment equally binding with, "Go into all the world." I think it is utterly impossible for anyone to say, I will buy my way out from responsibility by making a missionary pledge. I do not believe this is Christianity. It may be a hobby, but it is not Christianity. The love that will burden you to send the Gospel where you cannot go will burden you to be a witness where you are. And if you were to call "help" hauling logs, as the illustration is old and true, if you were to join a company of people hauling logs, and you were to see a log being carried by ten men, and nine of those men were on the slender, thin, light end, and one was struggling with the heavy end, and you were going to help carry logs, which end of the log would you join? This has its application to the Mission Field, but it also has its application to the place where Satan's seat is, to the center of city church.

Now I believe that our Lord saw here the steadfastness of His servants in the midst of such an environment as this. Christ recognized their faithfulness to the truth. Here was a church that knew the truth, and stood for the truth. They knew His name, and they stood for His name. "Thou holdest fast my Name." Why? Because His is a saving name. His is a pardoning name. His is a healing name, a delivering name. Oh the power in the name. Demons are cast out by His name. Blind eyes are opened by His name. Those dead in their sins are made alive by His name. The power is in the name of the risen Son. And they held fast His name.

But also we find: "Thou hast also not denied my faith." Not, our faith. But my faith, said the Lord Jesus. This faith that I have; this message of the revelation of myself. Is it not interesting? It is the Word of God. God's Word that He has given. Now He said, "You have held it fast." You have stood on it.

And then He commended this church for their endurance in the face of tribulation and persecution. Antipas undoubtedly was the pastor of this church, one that was taken before the Roman authorities and falsely accused, condemned, and was slain. And they had in the face of this persecution stood strong, stalwart, not cringing. You can be sure of this that the Lord is always going to recognize everything that you do for Him that is right and fair and true. But you can be equally sure the Lord is going to judge everything that is wrong and sinful and unclean. And here we find the sword of God's love. We have seen the speech of God's Son, the seat of God's adversary, the steadfastness of God's children, and now in verse 14, the sword of God's love. His eyes are as a flame of fire. "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam."

Who is Balaam? Who is this one? Well you know from the Old Testament, he is the one that was hired by Balak to curse Israel. Balaam knew the truth. He had been taught the truth. He was able to declare the truth. But this was Balaam's trouble: he loved gain. He was greedy. He was selfish of money, and selfish of position, and because of the avarice of his heart, he forbade the truth to do its work, and he remained in moral perversion. Oh how many there are that know the truth, and affirm it in the twentieth century, and yet, like Balaam, have never allowed the Word of God to check the wickedness of their heart. And such are known.

And we find our Lord Jesus is intimating that this is a peculiar possibility in the center of the city church because of the separation of the people, of necessity must experience, scattered as they will be. And therefore He is saying, "You do not know about it," as He speaks to the faithful elders, "But I see it. I see it; for my eyes are as a flame of fire."

Now there was another company of people there, probably not large, but some and enough so that the Lord says, "There are also those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans which thing I hate." Who are the Nicolaitans? They are the people that believe that moral conduct does not make any difference, and that just as long as you believe what is right, you can live as you want, that Jesus Christ is blind, and has lost His moral sense and judgment, and it makes no difference how a person lives, as long as he has "accepted Jesus." The doctrine of the Nicolaitans, that has lost its moral force and lost its power, and lost its effect, is the doctrine of antinomianism. This is raging rampant now in America, in the midst of fundamentalism and our evangelicalism, where it is being intimated in some quarters at least that if you teach holiness of life as an evidence of regeneration, that you are actually teaching heresy.

It was as I have told you John Wesley[122], who wrote in the introduction to his book, *The Circumcision of the Heart*, a melancholy thought expressed by one of our eminent writers that there are certain ancient truths so long neglected that they sound to our untaught ears like heresy. Here is the doctrine of holiness, and that God hates sin, and that he that commits sin is of the devil regardless of how many times he has been baptized, what church he belongs to, or how many Scripture verses he can quote. And he says, "There are some among them

[122] John Wesley (1703-1791) Anglican cleric, Christian theologian, and founding the Methodist movement

that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans." This was, "As long as you believe, it does not make any difference how you live." But we understand the Word of God to teach that "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His, and let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."[123]

Now Christ establishes the condition for fellowship and blessing. Repent. You of the Nicolaitans, repent. You of the Balaamites, repent. Repent is the word. Change your mind about this. Give it up. Cease immediately. Or else, says He. What does He say? I'll call a council and have you excommunicated? I'll have your name stricken off the roll? Is that what He says? No. That is not what He said. He says, "Or I will come quickly and I will fight against thee." Do you see? Jesus Christ is particularly concerned about the city church. And he knows that it is the place where the seat of Satan is, and He knows that it is going to be that those who sin after the order of Balaam and the Nicolaitans that pollute it. He did not say "I will wipe away the church." He did not say "I will remove your candlestick." He does later. But He says, I am speaking now to those of the Nicolaitans, that I am speaking to those of the Balaamites. If you do not repent, I will come quickly and I will fight against them. I will fight against them.

I believe that we have got to understand that Jesus Christ has here made it perfectly clear that He is at any price going to have His testimony. You recall that when Dr. Simpson stood at the church down on 12th Street and preached what God had revealed to him and made real in his life, and elders of that church said, "No. We won't have it." And the people of the church said, "No. We won't have it." God said, "I will have it. I will have it." And the good doctor left his salary, and

[123] 2 Timothy 2:19

emoluments, and honored and preferred preference, and he walked out and he began a testimony. And I submit to you that Jesus Christ will have a center of city testimony. He will have it. He will have it. He will have it. And He will have it pure, and He will have it vital, and He will have it where the seat of Satan is. And He will either have it where we want it, or if He does not then He will have it where He will have it. He said, "Repent or I will come quickly and I will fight against them," for He is going to have a testimony where the seat of Satan is.

Now notice. "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches: To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."[124] What is this hidden manna? Our Lord Jesus Christ said, "I am the Bread of Life." I am the Bread of Life. And that hidden manna is none other than Christ living in you, filling you, living His life through you. This is the hidden manna. And this the Lord will have. And He is going to have in Pergamos a people that have eaten of the hidden manna, a people that hate sin, that will not tolerate the Balaamites, nor the Nicolaitans, will not tolerate truth that does not strike at the root cord of avarice, and covetousness, and immorality and uncleanness, and is going to give to Him a people for Himself, a people that are His. He said I am going to have a people that have overcome. I am going to have a people that have eaten of the hidden manna, a people that have received the white stone and their name written on it. In other words, I am going to have a people that are mine, wholly mine, and that know me.

I believe that Jesus Christ is desirous today, as never before in the history of our land, to have in the center of the city not

[124] Revelation 2:17

something that man erects for God, but something that God sovereignly and supernaturally erects for man. Beloved, more than anything else in all the world I want to be part of that. I want to be part of it. Where Satan's seat is there the strife is the hottest, there the privilege to stand for Christ is the greatest.

May God bless you. May He give to you a vision that He is going to have in the Pergamoses of our land, right in the center of the city, in the heart of iniquity, where the sink of moral depravity is at its lowest. For where sin abounds, He will have grace much more abound. He will do it. Will He do it in you? I trust so. Let us pray.

Perhaps I am speaking to someone tonight who came in lost and undone. I want you to know that this one whose eyes are a flame of fire knows all about your sin. And if you will cease being God in your life, reigning as a little attender in the precincts of your own heart, and will throw yourself at the feet of the one who is worthy to receive your life -- Jesus Christ, the Son of God, He will forgive you, and pardon you, heal you of your backslidings, and of your sin, and of your uncleanness, give you a new heart and a new life, and make you a new person.

I speak to you who may have been caught up subtly and slyly with the sin of the Balaamites and the sin of the Nicolaitans. Oh, repent. Repent is His word. Give up the ambition, the vanity, and the pride, and the self-seeking. Give up the immorality and the uncleanness of heart and thought and life. And let Him give to you that hidden manna. Why would you have the Son of God come quickly and fight against you, when He offers you Himself and all that He is?

Our Heavenly Father, we bow before thee now realizing that here are a people that have been gathered tonight. We will

never be quite as we are, a company as we are. And our hearts cry out to thee that the deep sense of the privilege of standing for thee in the heart of the city may be burned in upon us. And the deep sense of the danger that is peculiarly ours, because we are in the city, may come upon us. And a high sense Lord of the danger that is peculiarly ours because we are in the city may come upon us. And a high sense Lord of the danger in which we stand when we would pollute that which Jesus Christ holds so dear to His heart, a testimony where the seat of Satan is. Let fear and awe, and wonder come upon our hearts. And somehow, if it please thee Lord, get right here at this place a people who love thee with all their hearts and are prepared at any cost to be the vehicle of blessing for which thou art waiting, and seeking, and yearning. We know that if thou canst not have it here, thou wilt nonetheless have it. But, Oh God, do thou make us to be that testimony that thou canst seal and honor as thine, because it is wholly given over to thee, utterly abandoned to thee. Now we pray, Lord, that one that has come in with any kind of spiritual need will not leave until it is met.

I wonder if just in this closing moment if there is one that would say by upraised hand, "Pray for me." Is there? Yes I see it. God bless you. Are there any others anywhere? For the one whose hand is raised we do pray. For those whose hands ought to have been raised, whose hearts are wrong toward thee, we would pray. Oh God, do thou work. We invite thee to work, to get here that testimony that thou dost seek. In Jesus name and for His sake, we pray. Amen.

Shall we stand now for the benediction? I am going to ask dear Brother from New Jersey if he will pronounce the benediction. Will You? Come to the platform. Mr. Rev. Phil Hewing from New Jersey is going to pronounce the benediction.

"Let us bow our hearts in prayer. Our loving Father. Thou hast been good to us this Lord's Day to bring to our hearts thy precious Word. How we thank thee for the message of this hour, and when men are forsaking the city, godly men, and moving to the suburbs, it is refreshing to hear a voice from God concerning the passion that Christ has for the lost in this great metropolitan area. Do thou bless this witness here, Dr. Reidhead and the co-laborers, and the fellowship of the saints. Save souls through this ministry, and draw the children of God to this place to raise up a mighty testimony to His saving name and matchless name. So bless now and return the children of God to the hour of prayer on Wednesday to bear before thee the needs of the world and of the community, and the hearts of the children of the Lord. We ask in Christ's name. Amen."

The Victor's Life Power

Now we'll turn directly to the Word. The Victor's Life Power, the Church at Sardis, as this begins the third chapter of Revelation. We shall consider this evening, verses 1-6 in this third chapter. I shall read it, that we might all hear it and familiarize our self with it. Then we shall immediately consider how it applies to the Church today, as well as to the church to which it was written.

"And unto the angel of the church." And by the way when we use that word angel, we have reference to the messenger. The one who stands there before the Lord as carrying the message to the Church.

"Unto the angel of the church in Sardis write: These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the Book of Life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Smyrna and Philadelphia were churches that received letters from our wonderful Lord, in which there was absolutely no blame. See the Lord, isn't always finding fault with the Church. He wrote to these two, and He said, "There's nothing to which I should chide you or condemn you." But Sardis and Laodicea received no praise from the Lord. He dealt with them exactly as they were.

Back in the first verse, we find that He says, "He that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars." The word seven in the scripture is the number of perfection. We would well read this, "He that hath the Spirit of God who is perfect, in all of his ministries complete." This number seven has reference to wholeness, fullness, perfection, and completeness.

Thus the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the Church, and behalf of the Church is a complete ministry, and there is nothing that's going to be overlooked or omitted either for the good of the Church, or for the discipline of the Church, for the accomplishing of the full purpose of Christ for it.

The seven stars refer as we have seen -- we've accepted this as the common typological association, to the messengers. These were those that stood before the people in these various churches. Local churches were viewing them, and ministered to them as teachers, or prophets or pastors, whatever the responsibility would have been.

They were there, held in the hand of the Lord to speak for Him. So He's saying I am the one that is speaking to you, that has the perfect ministry of the Holy Ghost from me, and I have these who serve me, who are conscious of what the Spirit of God is saying. Now, the Lord Jesus has spoken to John as the one whose eyes are as a flame of fire, we've seen that.

He penetrates just as fire will go into the iron. And I suppose the best analogy we could use, there was no frame of reference for John, we would have to say X-ray. I am sure that if this was being written today, that the analogy would have been taken from fire to X-ray.

He would say, "He that hath eyes that see right through." For we know full well, that you put the metal into the iron into the fire. The next thing you know the fire goes into the metal, and there's this penetration so that what is in the heart of it is found out. Our Lord Jesus is the one who doesn't look on the outward appearance but who looks upon the heart, and therefore the first thing we see in this church is that Christ's knowledge is complete and inerrant.

Complete in that he knows everything, inerrant in that he knows it perfectly. We see so little perfectly. It's so very hard for us to judge, perhaps that's the reason why he has said, that when it comes to the matter of motives we are never to judge. Never to judge why people do what they do; what they do we must of course.

If something is untrue, it's untrue, but you don't know why, this is the point where the human wisdom has to stand outside the mysterious depths of the human spirit and say, "Well I can't go any further. I just don't know." The Lord has reserved this privilege to Himself, it's His. He's the one that in that day is going to judge the secrets of the heart. Now, "by their fruit you shall know them,"[125] and we shall see in a moment that it's not necessary to accept the profession of everyone that claims to be a Christian, but when it comes to the matter of judging motives.

This Church at Sardis for instance, He says, "I know thy works." Apparently they were continuing in many activities,

[125] Matthew 7:20

and ministries, outward expressions of their faith. And looking at the church from the outside, you would say "Here is a successful affluent church." Sardis was no mean city at this time; it was a city famous in history at the time that it was taken by one of the conquerors. They found over $600 million worth of treasures, gold and silver and precious stones which were removed when the city was raised and sacked.

It still is a city of great importance, a cultural center, educational center, and entertainment center. In fact it is one of the most notorious of the cities in terms of profligacy, and iniquity and immorality. And apparently this church is standing there in such a way, that viewed from the outside, everyone would say, well look at what an active thriving busy church this is.

The Lord Jesus said, "I know thy works." He knows what's being done, and above all He knows why it is being done. He knows the profession on the one hand, and the true state of the heart on the other. We're dealing now with the church that might have a profession indeed, as He is writing to the church.

Then we come back to the fact that a church is not a building, nor an organization it's a company of people. When the Lord Jesus looks upon the heart, he goes down below the profession through heart attitude. We have discovered early that profession is no proof of life. I'm confident that Ananias and Sapphira knew the Apostles Creed or its equivalent for that day.

They could have given you a good reason for their being included in the number. God knew their heart, the Lord Jesus knew it. Have you ever been to the Africa Room at the Museum of Natural History? Every once in a while I suffer

from great lonesomeness for Africa, once a missionary always a missionary.

There are times when I just put my hat and coat on and jump on the subway and get off at 82nd street and go back to Africa. It's an exciting thing, some of you have never been there, well they will see you there soon, I hope. Yes it is…it's interesting. I'll stand there, look at scenes, similar to those where I've been, where I've walked and hunted, and it all looks so lifelike.

The antelope stand there, not just with glassy eyes, but somehow in the art of the ones that have established these beautiful windows in life situations. They seem to have the fright that you would expect being startled by your walking down to the next window you know. It's a very lifelike situation. It hasn't fooled me, the profession that they have is these folks are alive in here, but I know better than that.

They look like everything outwardly; the grass is there, they brought that from Africa. The leaves from the trees have been brought, the weeds have been brought, the little bugs and ants that crawl in the ground in the slime of the water hole are all there just as they were. But they're not alive, they have a profession to be, but it doesn't take a great deal of insight to realize that there's a difference between that, and this great hartebeest out on the glebe, out on the field, bounding away with those mammoth strides that just eat up the field.

No they're not alive, and so it is, profession doesn't prove life. I suppose you could educate a parrot to repeat the plan of salvation, and it wouldn't prove anything except that you were a good teacher. Wouldn't prove that he had what he was talking about. It's no more proof of salvation for a person to recite the plan of salvation than it is to name a ship the

Safeguard for instance, and thereby conclude that it will never be sunk.

It's good to have a name like that. I'd soon go on a ship with a builder that says Safeguard, or Good Speed or some other encouraging name. The fact that they so christened the ship and painted the name on the front of it does not mean it's going to make it to harbor. Because someone can recite the plan of salvation, and the Scriptures that prove it, does not prove that they have life.

Now we are not able always by any means, to ascertain this. Perhaps this is why the Lord said the chaff and the wheat will have to grow together, the tares and the wheat rather. That He would have to separate them in His own Day. I'm sure in Matthew 7 He sets that as a great surprise when people will come and knock on the door, and say: "Good Lord we preached in the streets, we cast out devils in your name, we did miracles in your name."

He said, "I will say unto them from within away with you, I never knew you."[126] I think those are the saddest words in the New Testament, that they had ... they'd known the right things about Him, the right things to do, and the right places to go, and even the right things to say but they didn't have Him. They didn't have life, they didn't have Christ.

Two houses in that same Matthew 7, both outwardly the same appearance. You'd look just like some of these houses in the additions around the metropolitan area. Everyone is the same for blocks. The only difference said the Lord, outward appearance is the same, and window set the same, doors the same, everything about the same, same material in fact.

[126] Matthew 7:21-23

But if you go inside, you'll discover that one's just sitting on the sand. They didn't bother to dig a foundation, they didn't bother to excavate what was standing in the way, they didn't bother to anchor it, and put it in a foundation. Didn't go down the rock.

It's all right, no problem at all, until the flood comes, until the judgment comes. Then the one who's known all the time, which one was anchored to the rock, and which was just built on the sand, He will not be surprised but the occupants will. Because they thought perhaps since they could fool themselves and fool their fellows, they could fool the Lord.

The Lord says, "No, I know thy works." I know all about it. "I know that thou has the name, that thou livest, and are dead." Our Lord Jesus has spoken out, in no uncertain terms about hypocritical professors. We need remind our hearts about it because constantly we're meeting those around us on every side.

You see everybody has a plan of salvation, did you know that? If you've done much personal work around New York, you'll discover almost everybody has some kind of a plan of salvation. Some religion, some sect, or maybe they've gotten around the problem by saying there's no God. But you see their whole plan of salvation depends upon the fact that they prove to themselves there's no God.

Consequently this becomes their religion. They just destroyed the source of their trouble in their own thinking and thought by this means to escape. It's their plan of salvation. Our Lord spoke very very carefully, and we need to see it to remind our hearts. If you would turn to Matthew 23. We would let Him speak His mind here, the one who says in gentleness and love, for that's the way he speaks in this verse, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."

Here in Matthew 23:13 His word is just so different. "But woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against man, for neither go in yourselves, neither suffer them that are entering to go in."

Again in verse 25 to 28. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

Christ' knowledge therefore is complete and inerrant. He knew the Pharisees, He knew the Scribes, He needed no man should tell him. Now when He speaks to John, he says, "I know the Church at Sardis. I know their works, I know their name, and I know their hearts." As He looks at us tonight here, He knows you, He knows your name, He knows your works, and He knows your heart. He knows me, He knows my profession, He knows my name, He knows my heart.

I probably will never know you, and you will probably never know me, but we know that we are both known fully and completely perfectly, by our wonderful Lord for His knowledge is complete and inerrant. Next thing we need to see in this portion of Scripture is that Christ' warning is both appropriate and necessary. Notice now, in this second verse He begins, "Be watchful, don't be deceived, don't be careless, keep watching, lest you should be overtaken," because He knows.

There's a personal commandment in this, do you see it? It's in the imperative mood; who's the subject of such statement? Wouldn't you make it personal, if you were to read it, wouldn't you say, "You be watchful." Of course. He's talking to us, as well as to the church, to those to whom he wrote that time.

This is a matter that I must take to myself. What must I watch? First I must watch faith, and so must you. Because you see "faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen."[127] It's so easy to let the truth of the Scripture become words in our memory rather than faith in our hearts.

This is why so many are going to miss Heaven; this is why they have a name to live and are dead. They have the plan of salvation in their intellects, in their memories, but not in their hearts. This is why we must be watchful. Lest we should make the sad mistake of confusing what our intellect sees and perceives with what our hearts experience.

It's tremendously important therefore, that you should take constant inventory of your own experience and see to it that you are living what you believe. For instance, do you believe in Hell, do you believe that men and women that die without Jesus Christ they're going to be forever in that dark place that is called Hell, where there's "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth?"[128]

This church believes in Hell. The statement of our Society is that we believe in Hell. This pulpit has through all the decades since first there was a man to stand behind it and has preached, that there's a Heaven to gain, and a Hell to shun. Is this just a phrase that you've racked somewhere in your memory or is this the truth which you believe?

[127] Hebrews 11:1
[128] Matthew 25:30

I've told you in the past and repeat now that you could see the implications of it in the minds of the unsaved. The man sentenced to die for the crime of murder in England refused to see a chaplain. Man after man would come to speak with him at the request of the bailiff and the judge. He'd curse them all the way, until one man came and put a chair there, and said "I'm going to stay."

At length, the condemned man was so exhausted and weary that the preacher could get in a word. And he began quietly not to ask questions or to make a statement, but to tell a story. It was the old, old story of God's grace, and of God's love in Jesus Christ. He told that as though he were telling it to a little boy sitting at his feet, and the culprit inside the bars couldn't help but listen.

After it was finished, the man came to the bars with tears in his eyes and said, "That is the most wonderful thing I ever heard." That was the first words he said, "the most wonderful thing I ever heard." And the preacher said, "I'm so glad." The man looked at him and said "I only wish it were true."

"But it is true, I believe it." "Yes, perchance you think you do, but you don't believe it. You're here because you're the only man that's gotten to speak to the fellow that's cursed out all of the chaplains that had come to see me. They're going to write you up in the paper, they're going to talk about you, but you don't believe it. He said none of you believe it."

"I was reared here in East London under the shadow of some of these cathedrals. As a boy, I would come and the people coming out of church would ask me to hold their horses, and threaten to cuff me if I didn't do it right. Never once did anyone take me over in the shadow of the building and sit down and tell me this; that God loved me and Christ died for me."

“I'm notorious now, and you all want to get a chance to talk to me just because I'm notorious, but not because you care for me.” He said "You don't really believe what you're saying.” “But I do.” “No man, you don't." Then the culprit looked at him and put his hands though the bars and said, "Listen if I believed what you say you believe, that there's a Heaven for those who trust in Jesus Christ, and a Hell for those that don't receive Him or reject Him, why man I’d crawl if necessary on my hands and knees across every cinder path in Britain to warn men to flee from such an awful fate, and to receive such a gracious gift.”

Do you believe? Do you believe that Jesus Christ is coming? Do you believe that He could cleave the sky at night and come? Do you believe? Oh you ought to look, be watchful of your faith, lest these ancient verities, these glorious truths, the very beams upon which our faith, our confidence rest become all dust covered and cobwebbed, and they’re just left and not taken for granted. Do you really believe? Watch your faith, and then you’re to examine and watch your hope. Hope lives in constant expectancy.

Despair is another form of unbelief. I have spoken to you in the past some years ago, and ought to repeat it annually about the five deadly “Ds.” You know what they are. If you don't, you better write them down quickly, though I can't enlarge on them tonight.

The first deadly “D” is disappointment, and no Christian ever has a right to be disappointed about anything. The second deadly “D” is discouragement, because when you've once been disappointed the heart of your courage is gone, and there's no use trying again. Discouragement then moves into disillusionment and what seemed to be a bright shining city is nothing more than a mirage.

Disillusionment then moves into depression, and the clouds settle down upon the heart, and one can't throw them off or escape. And then this depression moves into defeat, disintegration of morale. And it all began back there with the sin of disappointment. Remember what happened to Pilgrim, why he was hindered in his journey? He fell into the Slough of Despond.

And Evangelist said, "I see by the mud dobs on you that you've been in the Slough of Despond. Didn't you know that there was a path through?" "Yes, in my haste, I didn't look for a path. I just plunged in." How many times it is in your experience perhaps, when hopes gives way to despond, despondency and despair, disappointment. It's wrong, we will have to deal with it as a sin, the sin that it is. Confess it as a sin.

Because just as the opposite of faith is unbelief, which is a sin, the opposite of hope is despair and despondency. Oh no, look well, be watchful of your hope. The hope not just that of His coming, but we ought to wake in the morning saying today could be the day when He cleaves the sky and comes back again.

In terms of your total life, what are you hoping for? What are you looking for, what are your goals? There's only one goal worthy of an intelligently taught and committed Christian. What is your goal in life? There's only one goal, that's the glory of God in Jesus Christ through your life.

Don't you see? And you don't know how to map out the way to that city. Only He can, and consequently there ought to be this constant rising of hope. Perhaps one of our great heartaches is we set goals that aren't in the will of God. Then we've achieved them, but in so doing we've had to detour from His purpose for

us. If you can commit yourself to the one goal, the one purpose the glory of God, you'll live for it, you'll die for it.

Can you bring yourself to say, "I want God to be glorified by whatever means He chooses; if I can glorify God more by being dead than alive, I choose to die." Can you say that? Or is life so sweet that you'd rather live at the expense of the glory of God. Can you come to the place where you say, "If I can glorify God more by being unknown than known, I choose to remain anonymous and hidden and unknown."

Can you say, "If I can glorify God more by being a failure than being a success, I want to be a failure?" Noah was you know. From every standpoint Noah was a failure. Jeremiah was, and Ezekiel was. Everything Ezekiel preached about, preached for, turned out absolutely contrary to what he wanted. All he asked was "Lord I want to glorify Him." Can you come to the place where you sing it, in the hymn book, "Ready to go, ready to stay, ready thy will to do. Ready for service, lowly or great, ready thy will to do."[129] This is where He brings us, and this is the hope. What is the hope that is to be primary in your life? What is this thing? That in everyday, in every circumstance, in every situation, God and his sovereign love is going to use my life, to bring glory to His Son.

You see the moment that you lose sight of that, then you begin to look at your feet, like Peter did at the waves, down you go. You've got to be watchful of your faith, and be watchful of your hope. And then of course the most important thing is to be watchful of your love.

Because just as faith appropriates and hope receives so love creates the climate for both to love God. Now how do you want

[129] "Ready" Music by Charles Tillman 1903; Words by S.E.L. and A.C. Palmer (1845-1882)

to love Him, I've spoken of it. You love Him because you want to glorify Him, because He's worthy to be worshiped, because He's worthy to be served. I think of our Lord Jesus, as He loved the Father and did only those things that please the Father.

You should watch your heart, there's a thermometer you know in your heart. You can tell whether your hearts' affections and your hearts' devotion and your hearts' love are where it used to be. Watch, "be watchful" said the Lord, "and strengthen the things which will remain." They haven't been taken away yet. They aren't gone yet, strengthen them, watch over them. Because if you don't, you'll find that they wither and fade, and fall from the vine and they just pass away.

Thus our Lord has established for us that there's a responsibility for you that He is fixing. And He's telling you that it's a great blessing if you obey and a great loss if you don't. Remember, be watchful and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die. Here He looks at this church and they didn't know it.

They thought everything was going on beautifully, but they didn't realize the heart was out of it. The consequence of that was it was ready to die. He said be watchful. Do again your first works and see that the matter of the inside is what it ought to be. How can you know that you are in need, that you have been overtaken, that you have come to the place where difficulty is impending, for that's what He's saying?

"Remember therefore, how thou has received and heard, and hold fast and repent. If therefore thou shall not watch, I will come on thee as a thief in the night." How can you know that you are in a place where He's going to come on you as a thief in the night? The first thing I would suggest is this; that what sins over which you had victory at one time, began to assume

ascendancy in your life again, then you know the watchfulness is gone, you've been overtaken.

This was the Church at Sardis, and you know full well that when things over which once you had victory are beginning to creep back in your life, you're in dangerous ground, the place where you'd gone to the Lord for help. I would be so bold as to say this, that in my experience and possibly in yours, my inner heart life and the temptations that come into assail and assault are linked together.

When your eyes focus on Him, and you're occupied with Him, and you're filled with faith and hope and love, these things aren't the problems they once were. When you get your eye off of Him, it's like Peter looking down from the face of the Lord to those waves, and they begin to mount up, and pull, and suck and draw and sink into them.

You know that you're in the place of the Church at Sardis, when besetting sins began to assume ascendancy in your heart and life again. I don't know what your besetting sin would be, to some it's probably immoral imaginations. To some other it may be reading, maybe a temptation to read things which are wrong. To some other a worldly pleasure, to somebody else it maybe just to exaggerate and to enlarge. To someone else it maybe to get things, and take things that don't belong to them.

I don't know what your besetting sin is. I know this, when that begins to rise in your life, its evidence that you ceased being watchful, you ceased to strengthen, you've come into the state of the Church at Sardis. Then, you'll know another evidence that the Lord is about to come as a thief in judgment, is when you find the natural hardness, and lovelessness of your heart returning.

Let's not deceive ourselves, by nature we weren't very nice people. We were the kind of people that nailed Jesus Christ to the cross, did you know that? It was just folks like us, as nice as we are, that did that terrible thing, hard hearted. We're the kind of people that came before Moses. We'd have been right there, probably with Korah and the gainsayers.

No, our hearts were naturally proud, and arrogant, and angry and selfish. When you begin to find the tenderness and the gentleness that always comes from the Spirit of God moving, and criticism coming in, and hardness coming in, and sharpness coming in. You know full well, that He is about to come as a thief in judgment.

The third thing that you'll be sure as evidence that the Lord is just standing on the threshold to come, and you're to be watchful and to remember, the third evidence is this; when you find you're unwilling to be reclaimed. When you're unwilling to do anything about it. There was a time when you were so sensitive that if you listened to something that wasn't right, you went to the Lord, and asked His forgiveness.

It just kind of crept up, and you're not as sensitive anymore, perhaps. Well it's what He said, listen to it, "Be watchful, strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou has received and heard and hold fast and repent. If therefore thou shall not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shall not know what hour I will come upon thee."

You know this when you're unwilling to give it up, because first you feel averse to instruction. When something comes from anybody; loved ones, family, friends, that touch the point of issue you don't like it. Then you hate to be told of your faults. If this comes you know it's just on the threshold. I know

it, there are times, and I'm not speaking down to you. I'm speaking to my own heart, I'm pointing at you, I don't want it to be impersonal.

I've got three fingers pointed at me, this is a very personal thing we're talking about tonight. He's talking to the Church, and I'm just sharing with you, don't mistake that. When we're unwilling to be reclaimed, it's ... When we're averse to instruction and we don't want to be told of our faults, and then we take offense at reproof and reprovers, those that come to us.

Then you know when love is doing its work, it's easy to be entreated, easy to be entreated. Then of course when we turn from the light to go to the unspiritual and worldly people for consolation. There's nothing that a person that the Lord is about to deal with likes any more than self-pity and justification. There's no place better to get it than from the unsaved.

If you want to really get the fur petted the way it lays, you go to some unsaved person and tell him how bad the church is, and they'll agree with you. Everything...They'll agree with every word you say. You see this is the evidence of it, when you discover that this is the Sardis state of heart, this is the thing the Lord has seen. Here are the people they have a name, they're active, they're busy, but deep within them there's no shame, there's no scandal. They haven't the sin of the Nicolaitans, they haven't the sin of Balaam. These are people whose reputations are intact and perfect, but only the Lord sees it. That's why I apply it to my own heart and to yours.

Now if anyone persists in this state, and continues in it, then it is evidence that they're unregenerate regardless of their profession. The works of the unregenerate are dead, and utterly deficient, those who are dead are utterly unresponsive to the

truth of God. One thing that you'll have to recognize as standard equipment with a child of God is a hatred of sin.

Therefore, when the Spirit of God finds us in the state of the Church at Sardis, we're reclaimable; we want to do something about it. Anybody can fall into it. The loveliest lamb with the whitest wool can fall into the pond where the sow has been wallowing. But I'll tell you something about it; it isn't going to stay there because it has a new heart, a different heart. This is what we find; the person that stays there is given testimony by their rebellion that they do not know the Lord.

"Remember therefore," says our wonderful Lord, "How thou hast received and heard." Let the Word do its work in our lives, pray it in. I think of how Aline instructed the sinners of his day: "When you hear the Word go home and pray it in." Whenever God speaks to us, whether it's from our daily devotion or from the Scripture text on the sidewalk or in the subway, or from a verse he flashes to our memory, we ought to pray it in. Lest we should let it slip and it should fail to do its work in our life.

When the Lord begins to put the knife in, don't draw back from it, run into it. Do you know the greatest curse that you could possibly have? It would be to have a conscious that wasn't stirred by the Spirit of God any longer. You say, "I wish I was in trouble." Don't say that, maybe the Lord would let you be in that state. I think it would be far more disastrous to you, to have your conscience not troubled by the Spirit of God. Your heart not stirred by Him, both with longing for Him and with concern for yourself. I say it would be a far greater horror to have that happen to your spirit than to lose your nerves, the sense of feeling. Can you imagine what would happen if there were no nerves in your hands? It would be bruised, and broken, and cut off, and burned away.

No, it can't be, let's rejoice that the Spirit of God has done it, and move in to meet Him and let Him fulfill His work. Hold fast and repent. Hold fast the night, if the Lord begins to bring it. Because He's dealing with things, He's dealing with carelessness, or indifference, or sleep and sloth, the forgetting and the neglecting of the truth, perhaps the failure to continue in repentance.

These are the things of which He is dealing. Then He says if you don't hold fast and you don't repent, then I'm going to come as a thief. There are two kinds of judgment, we need to understand this, there's the lion and the moth. Have you ever read that in the Old Testament, the lion and the moth? The lion comes with its claws out prancing, its mouth open, roaring, and it seizes its prey and drags him off. That's the way most people expect. You know some people have sin, and they really thought that lightning would come from Heaven if they did something. Nothing happened, the sky was without lightning bolts, and not a thing fell, and they thought well now, the Lord didn't mind that very much.

There are two kinds of judgment, there's the lion and the moth. You know what the moth does don't you. He gets into your winter suit in the summer and there's no noise. You don't hear him gnawing or chawing, no noise. Except when you go to take it up it’s ruined. This is what he says, I'll come as a thief, the thief doesn't advertise his presence, he just comes in and takes what's of value to you, and when you go to get it, it's gone.

Sometimes, I suppose, the clumsy one might make a lot of mess and you say, "Well somebody rifled my drawers." The one that's really clever would probably go in and take what he wanted and unless you took an inventory, you wouldn't even know it was gone. The Lord says, “I'm going to come as a

thief." I'm going to quietly steal it away, and you won't even know it's gone until you look for it.

How important it is, well what does He promise? We've seen His judgment so appropriate and necessary for our wellbeing as well for His glory. His promises are certain and encouraging. The undefiled ones, even if they're few, are never forgotten by the Lord Jesus Christ. "Thou hast a few names (in verse 4) even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments."

He knew every one of them, our Lord searches them out. I'm sure that He knows tonight, those here that have not defiled their garments. He knows, now I don't know, you don't know me, I don't know you, but He knows, and he's looking them out, he's searching them out. For the one that has not defiled their garments, for the one that's clean, in the midst of that.

You see this proves that you can be right, even if nobody else is. I'm so glad that you don't have to be dragged down into the quicksand by anything around you. The evidence of character, and the evidence of God's working in your life, is that you don't let yourself be influenced by untoward and evil associations. It's so easy to be a member of a crowd; all you have to do is go. It's so easy to be a chip going down stream.

All you have to do is be the live fish that's willing to jump the falls and go up to the place which its nature calls and the dead ones just can ride with it. Here were some in the city of Sardis that have life, divine life, and the evidence of that life was that in spite of the fact that they were defiled on every hand, the Lord says, "I have here a few that have not defiled their garments."

Oh that this might be true of you. And the Lord is looking for you, He's searching out, trying to find everyone, will find

everyone whose garments are stainless. What do you mean stainless, they've never sinned? No. But that they have held fast, and strengthened and have been watchful, and have repented. When there has come into their life, that which grieved God they dealt with it, and confessed it and have forsaken it and known the cleansing of the Blood.

With such He shares his life. What did He say? They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. One of the great losses of sin in the life of the child of God is broken fellowship with God. One can walk where He walked, and speak what He has been told to speak and have not the Lord with him.

We ought to treasure more than anything else in all the world, the consciousness of the presence of God. He said I will walk only with those who have not defiled their garments. They shall walk with me in white for they are worthy. What means this, does it mean that somehow even by the firmest purpose of heart that you have not sinned, or if you have there's no possibility of your walking with him in light? No.

It doesn't mean that. Perhaps it means that the worst ones are the ones that are there closest to Him, because in the discovery of their need and their brokenness they've come for cleansing and they've stayed low before Him. And thus He says I'll share my life with those whose garments are white.

White through His blood, through His cleansing. How we need thee, I never knew thee. We entreat thee, we beseech thee tonight our Father by the Holy Ghost gracious ministry. Expose each of our hearts that we may know and be certain of the genuineness of thy supernatural work of grace in saving us. Then our Father, those who would know of a certainty they're born again, yet are still subject to all of the sins that overtook the Church at Sardis; going through the motions, losing the

keenness of their faith, and the joy of hope, and the thrill of their love for thee. Father we've spoken to our own hearts tonight. Thou knowest each of us. We're here a company of people that have nothing to hide and everything to gain by being transparent with the living God.

Lord let there come tonight that sweet sense that thou art on our side. Thou art on the side of the weak one, and the erring one, and the fallen one, and the sinful one to forgive, to cleanse, to purge, yes to strengthen. Thou art asking us to be transparently honest with thee, and face just what thou would see. The weary one Lord, the one who may be discouraged, the one whose heart maybe heavy, the one who is filled with joy and satisfaction for every blessing thou hast was given. Whatever our state, whatever our condition Lord, thou art there willing to meet us in it and bring us to be all we ought to be.

Help us to see the Lord Jesus, as He sees this church, not to condemn it, to bruise it, to hurt it. But that by virtue of the door being opened and the heart being yielded, He could come to bless. We believe tonight, our Father that He wants to bless each of us. So gladly we take thy Word, we clasp it to us, we hold it there, and we say Father, "Do not let it be taken from us." Help us to take our mind so frivolous and light, and so easily wafted away to the inconsequential, and bind our minds in solid meditation and contemplation upon the truth, until it shall have done its work.

We ask thee Father now to fit blessing to every heart, every life. With our eyes closed, our heads bowed, just this moment. Are there those who would say God has been speaking to my heart? I have seen myself, my need, and I want to testify tonight by raised hand, God is dealing and I'm responding and I want God's people to pray for me, I need prayer.

Would you put your hand up, anyone anywhere. God bless you I see it, yes, yes. Anyone else? For these three, our Father, whose hands so quickly, so readily raised we pray, we thank thee our Father that the heart is known, the life is known, the provisions of Grace thou has made for such.

By this testimony, oh thou God of grace, will thou work in all thy delivering love, new ways to bring whatever victory and deliverance and strength and power is needed. We pray for these, and for others whose hands ought to have been raised, whose hearts thou dost know in Jesus name. May I say this, anyone that would like to remain to pray, I'll be so glad to talk with you.

Let us stand for the benediction. Now may the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do His will. Working in us that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord to whom be the glory now and forever. Amen.

So Great Salvation

Will you turn please to Revelation, Chapter 1. The Book of Revelation. Weeks ago this evening, we started our study of Revelation. We saw the latter part of the 5th verse. Tonight I would like to have you relate the statement in the 5th verse with that made in the 6th verse. A tremendously important Scripture is before us. One that has the power to completely change your life and ministry. Hear it now, as I read. I will begin with the 4th verse. I think this will clarify the matter, and set it before us in its full dimension here.

"John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God -- from Him which is, and which was, and are which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne; And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own Blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

I want you to notice the Gospel, for I believe we should always keep the Gospel clearly in mind, and see it in its full beauty and its full perfection. This is the Gospel. "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own Blood." Now we must ever preach the Gospel, but we must not stop with preaching the Gospel. We must preach the Word and declare the whole counsel of God. Everything in the Bible is true. It is all the Word of God, and yet it is not all Gospel. Some of it is Law. There is a great distinction between Law and Gospel. The Law is the revelation of the holiness of God. It is the revelation of the righteous demands of God upon morally responsible

creatures. The Law is the yardstick by which men measure their conduct and their character, and find that they have come short of the standard that God has set. By the Law is the knowledge of sin. The Law's purpose is to be the grappling hook God uses to strip us of our pretensions to self-righteousness. It is the Law that breaks us down, or breaks down all of our pride and reveals to us that we are in need of Salvation. It is the school master, indeed, which checks off our examination report, and proves we have failed. In other words, the purpose of the Law is to prepare for the Gospel, and tragically enough there seems to be grossly inadequate proclamation of Law, and therefore a grossly inadequate preparation for the Gospel.

But should I be speaking tonight to someone that knows that you are lost, and you have seen the holiness of God, and you have seen the justice of God, and you understand that since God is holy and God is just, that the only thing that He can do consistent with His character, with you, is to exclude you from His presence, and send you to that penitentiary for moral criminals, the Bible calls Hell. If you see that, and understand that, and you are prepared to take sides with God against yourself and consent that you deserve His wrath and His anger (In other words, if I am talking to a lost man, or a lost woman), I have good news for you. I have good news for bad people.

God loved you, and Christ died for you. He took your place. He took to Himself the penalty of wrath that ought to have been poured upon you for your crimes, the sentence of death which was leveled against you; and the Lord Jesus died in your place instead. Now that is the Good News. God's wrath had leveled a spear at your heart. You deserved it. The Lord Jesus never contested the fact that you deserved it. What He did was to step between you and the spear, and draw it into His own breast. Your spear. God says, He bent his arrows, bent his bow,

because of your sins.[130] And those arrows were aimed right at you. The Lord Jesus never argued. He knew that you deserved them. What He did was to step between you and the arrows, and draw those arrows into His own breast. The sword of God's wrath has been sheathed in the heart of God's Son. Christ died for you. Your sin has been paid; your debt has been settled; you may go to Hell unsaved, but you cannot go unloved, because God loved you and gave His Son and His Son loved you and shed His Blood. You can go lost, but you cannot go unloved. God has seen to that. The debt of your sin has been paid. Jesus Christ died for you. Now this is the Gospel. Christ died for our sins, according to the Scripture, and was buried and was raised again the third day, according to the Scripture. Oh has the Gospel reached your heart. "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us in His Blood."

"Nothing in my hands I bring. Simply to thy Cross I cling."[131] Now the grounds of your meeting God are the fact that you have nothing but sin, and He has everything you need. You come with your need, and God meets it. You come with your filthiness, and your uncleanness, and your crimes, hating them, turning from them to God, and He will cleanse you, and He will forgive you, and give you a new heart, and make you a new person. Oh I am so glad that I can preach the Gospel. Perhaps it would be wonderful if we could just confine ourselves to doing that. However, if "He gave evangelists and pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints into the work of the ministry," we have to do more than that.[132] Because the Gospel is the grounds by which you come to Christ, but it is not the message by which you grow up in Christ.

[130] Psalm 7:12
[131] Rock of Ages" Music by Thomas Hastings, 1830; Words by Augustus M. Toplady
[132] Ephesians 4:11-12

Now, if you have never been born again, this is the message for you. Christ died for your sins. But if you are a child of God, then this is the foundation upon which your Christian life rests, but you will not grow up into Christ by this message. This is the milk of the message that Christ died for our sins, that He loved us and washed us in His Blood. This is the milk. Now it is indispensable that we have that milk and drink deeply of it, for by it we live. But Paul said to one church, he said, "When you ought to be eating strong meat you have need of milk; when you ought to be teaching others then you are not able."[133] And so we have to go on, just as the text goes on.

You see the text. There is no period. If you look at verse 5, you will see that there is no period there. It is a comma. Not that the punctuation is inspired, but the message is. "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood." Many people wish that the message stopped there. They would be happy if it stopped right there. Oh, they would just be so glad if we just preached the Gospel, just Sunday after Sunday, and service after service, preached the Gospel. People would never go beyond it. They would never go beyond. They would never grow up in Christ.

Now if "He gave evangelists, and pastors, and teachers for the perfecting of the saints into the work of the ministry," then we must go on. We must go on as we read in Hebrews 6 verse 1 "Go on unto maturity. Go on unto perfection. Go on to become full grown in Christ." You see Paul, as we pointed out in messages -- ministry in days past, did not want to preside over a playpen full of believers that were paralyzed in their spiritual infancy, and simply had been washed in His Blood and forgiven and pardoned, but never went on. He said, "Christ in you, the hope of glory, whom we preach, warning every man,

[133] Hebrews 5:12

teaching every man that we might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus," full grown in Christ.[134]

Now I realize we have a problem. A very real problem. I want you to turn back to Acts, the 2nd Chapter with me for just a moment. And I want you to see again in this moment what happened to people who believed the Gospel so that they could go on to perfection. They could go on to maturity. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached. Two thousand people were pricked in their hearts, and said to Peter and the Brethren, "What must we do?" Peter said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."[135] "And they that gladly received his word were baptized. And the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."[136] But look what happened.

They did not go back to their apartments to sit all the time till the next Sunday. They did not go back to the dormitory to stay there all alone in the Godless educational institution. Look what they did. See what happened. And you will understand why they came to maturity, and you will see the problem we are facing: "And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine."[137] They were not just taught once a week. Their lives were given over to learning. Do you see? Their lives were given over to learning. They were consumed with the desire to know.

Perhaps the only way we are ever going to see God get what He wants in the Church is to bring it back on somewhat the same basis the Communist Party now operates. When a person is even a candidate to become a Communist, so I am told and so I read…He is disciplined in his reading and his study, and is

[134] Colossians 1:27-28
[135] Acts 2:37-38
[136] Acts 2:41
[137] Acts 2: 42

told how to use his time. Oh if I could I would love to put every one of you on a budget. Believe me you would read. You would read. You would not just buy the book and take it home, and just let it gather dust in some corner, and stack up between your bookends. You would read. And you would study. Oh, how I wish I had the authority and the influence with you to move upon you to give attendance to reading because by means of it, you are edified. By means of it, you are built up. "They continued in the Apostles' doctrine."

And then, they continued in fellowship. Talking with one another, day after day. I suppose they had work to do. I am sure that when they were saved, the harness maker did not close his shop. I do not suppose the brick man did not go to the…I think he went. You know someone says, "It must be wonderful to be a pastor. And you can give all your time to the study of the Word." What do you mean? Are not you acquainted with the facts of life? I have to work eight hours a day with things that have absolutely no bearing on study. They are related to the work of the church. I have to spend as much time in things that have virtually no bearing on study as the person with an eight hour a day job. The study that I do has to come out of the nights, and the days. If I take five hours for study in the morning, you be sure of this – that it is 12:30 or 1 o'clock before I can get to bed at night. You say, "Well if you are a pastor you just give yourself to study." I wish it were so. That is what it was intended to be, you know. They gave deacons so that they could give themselves to attendance and prayer. The trouble is you cannot get deacons to "deac" the way they did in the New Testament, or elders to "eld" the way they did. And so it falls back on the pastor apparently. At any rate, my life is a little different than yours, the details, the responsibilities, and the administration. Beloved, if you ever grow up into Christ, it is going to be because you give attendance to reading, and you give attendance to study, and

you give attendance to meditation, and you give yourself to the Word of God, and you determine you are not going to go on as a baby in Christ.

It does not come easily. You know you can live all your lifetime on a college university campus, push a broom down the halls, and never get a degree. They do not give you a degree for proximity to the Ivory Tower, Ivory Covered Towers. You have got to go in and discipline yourself with the work. And you can spend your lifetime here. You can have been here in the time that Dr. Simpson[138] was pastor, and not missed a Sunday since, and not have grown in the things of God. Because your attendance here is only relatively valuable. It depends upon what you do afterwards. "They continued in the Apostles' doctrine and in fellowship."

How do you mean in fellowship? Continued in fellowship in the things of the Lord. Do you meet with other people, and talk about the things of the Lord? When you get with Christians, does your heart overflow with a deep longing to talk about Christ? That is what happened here. They continued in the doctrine, and they continued in fellowship. And they continued in breaking of bread. They spent a lot of time visiting. Not gossiping. Visiting. Sharing in their homes. Being with one another. This was not only visit, but it was worship. Oh when your visit becomes worship, then it is profitable. The breaking of bread, you know, as we have said, was a common meal at the close of which they would break the bread and drink the wine in observance of the Lord's death. And they continued in prayer. Now we have got to do that.

[138] Albert Benjamin Simpson (1843-1919) founder of The Christian and Missionary Alliance

John Wesley[139] had the pattern. Maybe the thing God…(I have said this recently, and I am thinking more and more about it.) Maybe the thing we have got to do is to go back to the old Wesleyan Class Meeting. I just last year was able to get the entire works of Wesley, and I am reading them now with a fine tooth comb, trying to find out the genius of this thing that moved -- that God used so, that changed the history of England. He would have a Class Meeting, and one of the godly men, most mature, and oldest in the Lord, would be appointed the leader. And if people were not vitally interested in being part of the Class, and in seeking God, then they could not be in the Class Meeting. In other words, it was a privilege, not a right.

And as the person was born again, he had to give evidence of a real interest in God; he was made part of the Class Meeting. And they worked out, John Wesley and those with him, worked out a series of questions, something like a catechism. They would meet together in a group, and the leader would say, "Now, John, have you been praying? Well how did it go this week? How was your prayer life?" And they were all moving on to the thing that John Wesley called, Entire Sanctification. They were moving on to that state of being filled with the Spirit. And then they did not leave the Class Meeting when they were there. They went on to maturity. But the purpose of the Class Meeting was not just the Bible Study, but the purpose of the Class Meeting was to draw people on personally and individually into a normal relationship with Christ. And it was used.

Now, some way we have got to bridge the gap between now and next Wednesday and Sunday. You go home and you are

[139] John Wesley (1703-1791) Anglican cleric, Christian theologian, and founder the Methodist movement.

going to be tired and weary tonight, and you are going to be busy in the morning. You will come back. You have your plans made for the week. I suppose it will be hard for you to squeeze an hour in for God between now and next Sunday. Our lives become so complicated so quickly. Now, let us suppose that God makes a tremendous impression on your heart tonight, and you leave here saying, "This is what God has for me." What are you going to do about it tomorrow?

You have found out where you are. You have found out your need. You have discovered what you must do. And you go home tonight and you say, "Yes, God has put His finger on my problem. This is where I must meet Him." But tomorrow you are going to have to -- getting up, you will oversleep your alarm by ten minutes… you have to hurry to get ready to go to work. And when you get back tomorrow evening, you have your plans made and you will be so tired. And you will say, "What was it yesterday? How? There was something I was going to do. What was it?" And by Wednesday you will have forgotten that you were at church, and by -- or at least have forgotten the sermon. And by next Sunday, you will have forgotten which Sunday it was you were at church that God spoke to your heart. Because it will have been dissipated in the passage of time.

Most pastors have influence with their people two hours a week. And with many people, only one hour a week. And there are 168 hours in a week. Think of all the things that come from magazines, newspapers, radio, every means of communication, and then your conversations, and your work, and your thinking. All of these dissipating influences. So God makes an impression on your heart today, and unless you have fellowship with someone that is concerned about the same thing, it is soon going to be dissipated. Going to evaporate.

And this is why you have been in the same spiritual state month after month, and even year after year. And there has not been the progress there ought to have been made, because we have not been able to bridge the gap between the impact and the impression, and the conviction and the creating of an atmosphere in which this can be brought into full development. Now I do not know the answer. It is complicated a hundred fold in New York.

I do not know the answer, other than the fact that you become personally interested. Oh there are several things we could say, speculate. Wild dreams. We could say, "Well, let us get us a great big apartment building here in the city, and everybody that is interested move into that. The rent we are paying somebody could buy it, and then we will have Bible classes morning, afternoon, and evening." Well, that is a lovely idea, only the trouble with it is that it won't work. And probably if it did work, it would not be good. Because it would coagulate the Christians in one place, and rob them of the influence that they ought to have, scattered throughout the city. So that does not seem very practical.

And then we could say, "Well, we will have district meetings, and those that are interested will meet in a district." The only trouble is that it is hard to do. I think it comes down to this that you begin in earnest. And when you are in earnest, you are going to do something about it. I wish somebody would come to me and say, "Pastor, I know you cannot probably come, but is there not somebody in this congregation that is mature enough in the Lord that he could meet with a group of us one night every two weeks in a home, and we could talk about these things and go on, because we have just been going on and on listening and listening, and we have not come to the place of really gripping this thing." That would be marvelous. Well, you have got to do it. It has got to be done. In other words,

"Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" -- is marvelous. That is a wonderful place of beginning. The only place of beginning. But for too many it is the place of ending. And it should not be.

You say, "I am forgiven. I am pardoned." Yes. But now notice the text. Back to Revelation, Chapter 1 verse 5. "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us in His Blood." This makes me a child of God. This puts me in the family of God. This relates me to Him. Every parent looks down in the face of that little wee one that is in his hands, so small, and looks at the child, and says, "Well isn't this lovely. Here is a life." But…Are you content that the life should remain this way? No! Is God content to have you well born? No! It says, "He gave evangelists, pastors and teachers for the perfecting of those saints into the work of the ministry, until we all come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." And He wants you to grow up into Christ. "Unto Him that loved us, washed us from our sins in His Blood," and... Now we come to something further.

And hath made us (In His Sovereign purpose He has made us). In His condescending love, He has provided room for us. More than providing room, God has geared His work to you. It is all very well and good for somebody to say, "We do not like cheap clap trap. We do not like shallow things. We want something real." Do you know the cost of having something real? It is a lot easier to have something shallow. Believe me. And the trouble with me was I grew up on it, and was weaned on it, if I can use the word. And I know how to give it to you shallow. I could give you. But somehow about ten years ago God did something in my heart, and created an allergy to it, and I just cannot bring myself to it any more. It either has to be real, or I am not interested. But I want to tell you something. It costs to have things real. It costs. At least, when it is shallow you can have something big. But when you start for something real, well it is

just hard. It is costly. You see, as long as you keep a cross on a hill, and people sitting in the pew, looking at a cross on the hill, and they say, "Well, that is where Jesus died. Is not that wonderful. My sins are under the Blood." Then you can live anyway, and go anyway, and be any kind, and do it all, get a preacher that is going to do it all for them. And their whole job is just to bring people to him. It is well and good. But it is all on the level of milk. It is all on the level of the first floor.

But the moment you say, "Wait a minute. There is not only a Cross on a Hill, but there is a Cross for your heart." And you cannot be what God wants you to be until you let the Cross come into your heart. Not only a Cross for Christ, but a Cross for you. Not only that He died for you, but you died with Him. You have got another matter. The Cross gets to be mighty cutting. It comes to the place where it is a tremendously expensive thing to go on in this way. And so when you start for something real, you have got to be prepared to pay the price. And you have got to be prepared to pay the price. Not just to believe that there is a Cross. You see, there again you come to the easy believism. It's terrible to have an easy believism in respect to salvation, deadly, destroying. Multitudes will miss Heaven because of it. But you know, it is a terrible thing to have an easy believism in respect to the deeper life.

I had a conversation recently with someone. We both had the same background. We had grown up in an area, in a church community that had the deeper life message and ministry, and had the Altar, and gave invitations to the Altar. And we both had the same reaction. People, preachers would preach on the necessity of entire sanctification, being filled with the Spirit, and invite people to the Altar. Now when they came to the Altar they had to do something. They had to say something. Well, they would say, "Well, now look. Take it by faith." And so the person would take it by faith, and go away. Now one of

two things; if they had something well and good. If they met God, good. But if they had not met God, if they had not entered into the experience of the fullness of Christ, they had gone through the formula. They had taken it by faith. Now one of two things; they either had to lie and say, "I didn't get anything. It didn't work." Or, they had to say, "I did." When really they didn't, which was a lie. So they were in a terrible place. And the moment that I set up a formula for you in respect to union with Christ in death, or the fullness of the Spirit, I have made it easy for you to slip out into another side. I have put a fence and a stile. And you climb over the stile and you are in.

But the tragedy of it is, you can get people that have climbed over the stile of your formula that have not actually met God. And have not been filled with the Spirit. And the consequence of that is that you have just moved your problem from one side of the fence to the other. And so to say, "Now here it is." You have got to meet God. You have got to meet Him alone. You ought to meet together to talk and to pray and to think and to let these things come to a boil in your heart, until you really come to a point. It is costly. It is terribly costly. It costs your time. It costs your interest. It costs your prayers. Your convenience. But it leads to reality.

Now, everything in the Christian life is postulated on, first, being washed in His Blood. Being born again. But you see it does not stop there. It also is postulated on coming to the Cross and dying there with Christ. But it does not stop there. It also is postulated on being filled with the Spirit. Christ taking up His lasting dwelling place in your heart through faith. Let me bring you back to Israel. Remember where we were last year. Coming across the Red Sea is what you have here at the Gospel; they were redeemed by blood. The blood on the lintel, on the doorpost, redeemed by the Hand of God. The Red Sea stands

for forgiveness and pardon, deliverance from the wrath of God. But the wilderness stands for the state into which the Christian comes when he is born again. An intermediate state, a state where there is a war between two natures, where the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, where there is murmuring and complaining and lusting on the one hand, and then great desire for God on the other. And this speaks of the wilderness experience.

Now, unfortunately, we as pastors have been under tremendous pressure to gear all of Church life to wilderness Christians. But this is not where God put us. You see, God said that you get blessing when you go into the land, when you go through Jordan, which speaks of death with Christ, and into the land, which speaks of being filled with the fullness of God. Then you are in the place of blessing.

But you remember what happened to some of them. They were willing to come through the Red Sea, but when they came up to Kadesh-Barnea they turned and went back.[140] And then you remember what happened. Korah, with 250 of the elders and the men of renown and the famous men in the congregation, came to Moses and Aaron, and challenged Aaron, saying, Aaron, you are taking too much to yourself.[141] You are saying the only ones that can possibly minister in the Temple are the ones that are of your family, Levites, and of your family. And, Aaron, you are taking too much to yourself. We ought to do it.

And this is exactly the state of the Church, where people are to minister in the Church on the basis of being forgiven, instead of on the basis of where the whole of the Church is placed, on the other side of Jordan. But you say, "Aaron had not gone over Jordan yet." But he had in type. Because Aaron and all that

[140] Numbers 13, 14
[141] Numbers 16

were authorized to serve in the Tabernacle were those that had the Blood on the great toe, on the thumb and on the ear, which speaks of death with Christ. And on the Blood had been placed the oil, which speaks of the fullness of the Spirit. No one was permitted to work in the Tabernacle, offering incense before the Lord, sacrifice before the Lord, unless he had been anointed with the Blood and with the Oil. And thus the picture is there.

Now, here you are. You have been washed in His Blood. You have been born again. If you have not, then this is the invitation to you. Let me ask you. Have you come to the Red Sea? Have you entered in? Have you gone into the Land? For this verse – "He has made us kings and priests" -- is a ministry of Canaan. It is a ministry on the far side of Jordan. It is a ministry that God intended for every believer. Every believer.

Some years ago now -- four years ago, it is hard to talk; you become a tradition so soon that is the trouble, Dr. Tozer[142] and I were talking when he was here in October. He said, you know, my trouble is, people say, "Ah, that is just Tozer." He has written again. There it is. It is a terrible thing when you become a tradition. I understand they are saying the same thing about me now here and there: Oh that is just Reidhead. You have been with him too long. But the fact is truth is truth. And it does not make any difference whether my parrot says it. It is still true. And this is what we have got to face. And here it is. Everything in the Church is postulated on a person being brought into union with Christ in death and resurrection, and the fullness of the Spirit. In other words, let me put it this way - and I speak for myself. I have more to lose than most of you do. Fourteen years of ministry as a pastor and a missionary, before I knew anything of the Cross and union with Christ in death, or

[142] Aiden Wilson Tozer (1897-1963) Pastor and Author. Christian and Missionary Alliance

anything of the fullness of the Spirit, and when I look back on those fourteen years, I am absolutely convinced that before God they are nothing but ashes. People were helped. And I am glad for that. But as far as the glory of Christ is concerned, and my own rejoicing of having something to lay at His feet is concerned, I believe in that day there will be nothing but ashes. Everything that God ever does through a man he does through a man that has entered into union with Christ in death and resurrection, and is filled with the Spirit of God. It is the basic minimum for service. Not to be in His family, but for service, but for service.

All right. Now the question with you is first, "Are you under the Blood. Are you back there under the lintel? "Unto Him that loved us and washed us in His Blood." Are you there? Have you come through the Red Sea? Do you have the witness of the Spirit that you are born again?

The next question is, "Is the Cross real in your life? Are you filled with the Spirit?" Now I am talking to you that say, "Yes, I am under the Blood. I know that. And I am at Jordan's banks, but I need help to go in and to get over." These things have got to become real in your life. You are the ones that I am saying ought to get together with your Bible, you ought to read, you ought to study, you ought to pray; when you have problems, you ought to ask for them. If you need counsel, you ought to get in touch with me and have me arrange with you for someone to come and act as a sort of Class Leader to you, but it is as you give yourself -- give attendance to reading that the Lord is going to be able -- and study and conversation and fellowship, that God is going to make the truth in your heart.

You know sometimes I think of sowing seed in a seed bed that is pulverized and fertilized, and powdered, and the seed is under the ground about an inch. But it is so dry it lays there

one month, two months, six months, a year, two years, four years, and that seed never germinates for want of moisture and sun and light.

Now what does God want to do? God wants to bring you into maturity. God wants to make you a mature Christian. What will your ministry be when you are. Do you remember some time ago the first year I was here, I gave you the outline on the hand. And I talked to you about the ministry of the Spirit-filled Christian from the hand. Some of you were not here. I will give it to you. Some of you will be reminded by it. The thumb which touches all the fingers was the Ministry of the Fruit Filled Life, the fruit of the Spirit, without which nothing is profitable. Love, joy, peace; the fruit of the Spirit. Here it is. Against which all other ministries have strength. Then this was the ministry of Authority. Excuse me. The Ministry of Intercession. This was the Ministry of Ambassadorship. The Ministry of Authority and the Ministry of the Gifts of the Spirit. Five-fold Ministry of the Spirit filled believer. And tonight when we read in these words, "Hath made us kings and priests unto God," we are talking about this Ministry, the Ministry of Intercession and this Ministry, the Ministry of Authority. [143] Two of the five ministries that are set forth in the Word. They are not all set forth here. But they are all set forth in the Word.

Now what ministry do you have? I am speaking to you that are washed in His Blood. Do you have the fruit of the Spirit? Could you say there is much fruit? If you are in Christ, you have some fruit. But much fruit? Very patient. Very kind. This is the ministry of the fruit filled life. But it is only possible by being filled with the fullness of God -- a normal Christian. Then, what is this Ministry of Intercession. "He hath made us priests unto God." I would like to have you turn, so that you can see it and

[143] Revelation 1:6

relate it to what we are saying, to 1 Peter 2:9, and see there the kind of Church He wants, and the kind of Church that is going to show forth the praises of Him which called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. Here He describes it: "But ye are a chosen generation, (you are) a royal priesthood." A royal priesthood. You see the joining of those two words? King, priest. Royal priest. You are a royal priesthood, "a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." "Unto Him who loved us, washed us from our sins, in His own Blood, and hath made us to be kings and priests unto God."[144] A royal priesthood.

Now, because of Judah, back in the children of Jacob, sons of Jacob; you remember it was Judah that tried to sell Joseph. He was the leader in selling Joseph to the slave traders who took him into Egypt. He was the one who originated the plot to get rid of him. But remember it was Judah that said to Joseph down in Egypt when Joseph insisted on taking Benjamin, unknown--not yet revealed to his brethren, he said, "If you take my younger brother, Benjamin, you will kill my father. You will break his heart. And I promised my father that I would bring Benjamin back, and I entreat you to let me be your slave or take my life, but spare my brother."

This is the same Judah that said, "Oh sell him and get some money out of it. Don't just kill him." God has done a work in his heart. So now, from that time on, Judah is the one from whom the King must come, because of his intercession with Joseph on behalf of Benjamin. And this was Joseph's test, as to whether Judah's heart had actually changed, before he would reveal himself to them. I think that it would have gone hard for them if Judah had said, "Okay. Well we got rid of one. We will

[144] Revelation 1:5-6

get rid of another." But no. Something had happened to Judah, and so out of Judah the King should come. Not out of Levi. Not out of Levi. Now the Levitical priesthood were priests, but they never could be kings. Never could be kings. So it was out of Judah that our Lord came, but He was a King and a priest. But it did not say He was a priest after the order of Levi. He was a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Now I do not think anyone can tell you who Melchizedek was. Personally, and you cannot make me prove this. I would like to. It would help a lot. But I cannot. I think Melchizedek was Job. And you say, "Why?" Well, Job was the oldest Book of the Bible, and I think that Melchizedek was Job, but maybe nobody else does. I am probably wrong. It does not make much difference anyway. But the fact is there was a man by the name of Melchizedek that met Abraham. And Abraham recognized him for what he was, a King of Salem, and a Priest of the Most High God. And he combined two ministries, King and Priest. So in Hebrews we read that the Lord Jesus Christ was a priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Now, you remember what it says, that we are joint heirs with Christ. Now what does that mean? That means that when you were placed in the Father's family by adoption, in the Father's household, given His Name, made your Father, you were heir to everything to which Christ was heir, for you were a joint heir. And that means that you too had a ministry after the order of Melchizedek, a King and a Priest. Not after Levi, but after Melchizedek.

Now we can get an illustration of both of these things from Moses, though Moses was of Levi, but he functioned nevertheless as a king over Israel in many respects, though he was not king as such. Let us go back and see Moses now as a priest, and get some little insight in just a moment as to what it will mean for you to be made priest.

You remember when Israel sinned, Moses who was one of Israel, one of their number, kinsman to them, went into the presence of God, and pled with God on behalf of Israel, and said, Lord spare Israel. Think of the shame it will be when it gets back to Egypt that you took your people out into the wilderness to destroy them. You might as well have left them down in Egypt. And the intercession of Moses turned back the wrath of God, moved God to minister in justice and in love, and moved Him to minister also to the hearts of the people of Israel.

We have the pattern. Moses was a kinsman, and he represented his people. So it says, "He has washed us in His Blood and made us priests." Wherein does this ministry begin to work? In behalf of your unsaved loved ones. Your unsaved neighbors and friends are under the dominion of Satan. They are controlled by the god of this world. They are blinded by the god of this world. They are in the grip of Satan. They walk according to the course of the world. When He has made you to be a priest He has made you to be a representative. Now when you are filled with the Spirit of God, you know which one you are to exercise this ministry. You know the one. You cannot do it for everyone. There must be a selection. Now which one? And this is where the Spirit of God alone can guide you.

But here is someone that you meet in your office and your study, and you say (in your office, or in your home, or where you have some connection, some point of contact) -- and God burdens your heart for this person. They are just as rebellious and blind and dead as anything can be. Now you are to have the ministry of a priest. What is it? You see, you are kinsman to the person. They are no worse than you would have been. I do not care what they have done. You could have done it. You are their kinsman, and you are their priest.

Now what does it involve? It involves going into the presence of God on behalf of this person that God has laid upon your heart, to intercede for them, to take their place before God, to acknowledge their sins, to confess the justice of God's wrath, to accept the penalty for that person, and yet to plead, to intercede. You are the legal representative of the sinner, and your plea will be something like this: "Oh God. He has sinned. He deserves your wrath. He deserves your anger. He deserves judgment. But he is no worse than I am." Now of course I am over simplifying it. I am simply trying to illustrate it, not tell you what to pray. I am simply illustrating the principle. Lord, he deserves your wrath, but so did I. He deserves your anger, but so did I. He does not deserve your mercy. Neither did I. And yet Christ died for me, and I have come to Him, and put my faith in Him, and have been cleansed by His Blood, and I am pleading for him. Oh, God, awaken him to his need. And your intercession now releases God to work in that sinner's heart. God only works in grace, so we understand...only works in grace, where the sinner asks for it, or where the sinner's representative asks for it. And the reason that there are so few people being saved is because there are so few people that are genuinely performing the ministry as a priest. Interceding.

Now I would like to take just about a week with you on this. I think I have given you enough insight so that you can see something of what it means when you legally represent that sinner before God. You release God to begin to work. But that is only part of the picture. There is another picture. You have released God to begin to work by your intercession, but that person is still in the grip of Satan, still blinded by the god of this world. Now you come to the other phase of this ministry. He has not only made us priests. He has made us kings and priests. What is the purpose of a king? To exercise authority. Well, whose authority do you exercise? The one who has appointed you to be a king. And who made you to be a king?

King Jesus. And why did He make you to be a king? To exercise His authority where He put you. King Herod exercised authority for Caesar, not his own, but Caesar's. And so it is that when you come into an understanding of this ministry as a king, then you recognize the nature of what you will do. What will it be? Well, you have interceded; this releases the Lord to work. Now you have another situation. You have got Satan blinding the eyes, and shrouding the heart, and enveloping the spirit, and smothering with the death smother of darkness. And you want to see that person brought to a saving knowledge of Christ. So there is a second ministry. The first is for God on behalf of the sinner. Now the second is toward Satan. And the authority that He gives us is not over people.

You have no authority over the person, but God has entrusted to His Church authority over principalities and over powers. And in behalf of that unsaved loved one, we can plead in this fashion, "Father in the name of Jesus Christ we stand against every tie that a defeated foe has placed around this mind and spirit and will, for the release of this heart from all of the blinding bondage into which the person has been brought." And when you once see this ministry, and the responsibility to exercise the ministry as a king, then you realize that you are beginning to come to the place where you are laboring together with God. It is not just giving out a tract. It is not just giving the Gospel. But our ministry is a full ministry, a developed ministry. And it is this toward which my heart is laboring with you, and yearning with you.

Why if there were just as many people as there are here that had been washed in His Blood, had experienced the Cross and its cutting edge, and were slain by it, were filled with the Spirit of God, were hungry to become mature Christians with a full ministry, if no more than there are in this room tonight -- Do you know what would happen? If God could get this many

people that meant business with Him, and would go down with Him so that they could go up with Him, the world could be turned upside down. The world could be turned upside down. John Wesley said, "Give me two hundred men that hate only sin, and fear only God and I will turn the world upside down, for Christ."

Now here you are. There is a ministry. He loved us. He washed us in His Blood. He made us kings and priests. Have you gone on to that? Do you understand the fruit of the Spirit? Do you understand this? Do you want to understand it? Will you go on with God into this mature relationship where your ministry is not just in the flesh, not just in personality, not just in enthusiasm, but in the full provision of Grace? In the full ministry? Ministry of intercession, Ministry of authority are but two. "Unto Him that loved us, washed us in His Blood."

Oh how I long to see you go on, want us all to go on together until we shall come to the place where God has a people that He can truly use to show forth the resurrection splendor and glory and power of Christ. Well what can I say? What invitation can I give? I am closing. I am through. What invitation can I give? You are unsaved, I invite you to come to Christ, and know the sweet peace the cleansing Blood brings. If you are a Christian, I think I have been giving you an invitation right from the very first message. I am exhorting you, and entreating you to get in earnest. Give yourselves up to the reading of the Scripture, and the study of the Word. I'll tell you something. If you will, God will meet you. He will meet you. And I think you can sit here, and I can preach before you every Sunday for the next twenty years, and if you do not get in earnest all you will do is memorize what I am saying, and won't have profited from it. Oh dear heart that you will go on, until these things become real in your life. I do not know any other ministry adequate for a city like New York, except the

ministry for people that have come to the place where they are normal Christians. Now I want you to be one of them. I want to be one of them in a hundred fold more than I have ever experienced. I am not saying I am on a pinnacle. Come up where I am. I am saying this is God's Word. Let's go on together until we enter into everything God has for us, become the kind of people God can use. "Our weapons are not to be carnal, fleshly, but to be mighty to the tearing down of strongholds."[145]

You say, "Well, why has not this been done?" There is only one reason. It is being done where God can find a man. Get that little booklet, The Authority of the Intercessor[146] off the shelf. I have urged you to buy it. Read it. You will see what God did with someone who understood the ministry of king and of priest. Get The Authority of the Intercessor, and The Authority of the Believer. Wonderful to see what the Lord can do.

Well, bless your hearts, my heart aches for us. Oh how I want us to become the vehicle of God's blessing. I wish I could just get you so excited about the things of God that night and day you would just have to give your time to it. Why not? What else is as important? You know if you died tonight, how much of what you did last week really counted for anything anyhow. I think we ought to live every week in the light that we could die, in the light of the fact that we could die Saturday night. It might change where we put our time and our strengths, and our energy and our effort. I do not think we would be dilatory. If you only had a month to live, I think you would say, "Oh God, I want my life to count for eternity." The only way it can count is for you to be a normal Christian, filled with the fullness of God, equipped with a whole ministry that He has

[145] 2 Corinthians 10:14
[146] Rev. J. A. MacMillan Author of "The Authority of the Intercessor" (1942)

for us. Let us go on, Brethren. Let us go on unto perfection. Go on unto maturity. That is the word.

Well, bless you. Let us pray: It is wonderful for us to contemplate what thou hast done for them that love thee, but our Father here we are in the midst of the greatest missionary challenge the world has today. And, oh Lord, how little is really being done to show forth the glory of the risen Christ. How little. We are like children with our little buckets that are filling them with sand, and piling them up and the shore is so immense. Father, art thou not adequate for a place like New York? Art thou not enough?

We see the Apostle Paul saying, "I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ from Jerusalem to Illyria." Do it again, our God. Do it again. Find a people. We want to be part of it. Lord, if we are so indifferent, indolent, careless, that we are not willing to pay the price to be part of your new thing, part of a people that are wholly yours, then Lord bypass us and get them somewhere, but get a people that are willing to be normal Christians, go down into death that they can come up in triumphant life, embrace the Cross that they can know the victory of the empty tomb.

God, Father of our Lord Jesus, thy dear Son deserves a people that love Him with their whole heart, and will die for Him, and live for Him, and allow Him to live through them. We believe some of that people are here tonight. And we are asking thee, Lord, that thou wilt just build a fire of excitement and anticipation, and concern and burden under their hearts until they will be so intoxicated with the Lord Jesus Christ and so consumed with all that He has purposed for them, that everything else loses its tang and its taste, and the things of Heaven and eternity become of paramount importance. Now, Father, we believe that thou hast here some. Oh just a handful,

maybe a company, but, Lord, there are some here that mean business with thee. Now may the word of exhortation have found root in their hearts, and spring up and grow, and bring forth fruit to the glory of Christ. And oh, God our Father, we pray for that unsaved man that is here. We ask thee to just speak to his heart. And before we conclude the prayer, I want to ask you if you would like to be included. Are you here tonight and would say by your upraised hand, "Yes pray for me. I am lost. I want someone to pray for me. I want to be born again." Would you put your hand up? Anyone? Yes, thank you. God bless you. I see it. If you would say, we would be so glad to talk to you. Is there anyone else? All right.

Now, Father, we thank thee for this hand that has been raised, and the heart behind it, and we ask that the Holy Ghost will speak and bring this one into glorious liberty and deliverance tonight. Tonight. And bless every Christian. Do something so wonderful this week that when we come together next week it will be different because we are different. And we will give thee all the praise, in the worthy name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Let us stand for the benediction.

The Second Coming Of Christ

The Second Coming of Christ. Will you turn please to Revelation, the 1st Chapter. Revelation, Chapter 1. Someone has said that if you will accept the evidence of the Bible, the best proven fact in history is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. If you will accept the testimony of the Bible, the most certain fact in the future is the second coming of Jesus Christ.

There are three scriptures we are told, (I have not counted them.)…There are three scriptures that testify to the second coming of Christ for every one that tells us of the first coming of Christ. It would thus make it three times as certain.

Now the great subject of the Book of Revelation is to predict the trials and the deliverances of God's Church up to the end time. To a superficial observer, it may seem strange that God would let the enemy triumph as long and to such an awful degree as it seems that He has. However, the time is coming when all that is wrong will be righted and all who suffer will be rewarded, and all who have afflicted the saints will receive just retribution. It is to this period of the coming of Christ in judgment that the verse that we shall consider tonight is directed.

He wants us to know that we will suffer persecution. He wants you to know that. He said, "They that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."[147] And He wants you to know that the persecutor shall receive the just recompense of reward. He wants you to know that He will not spare you from that

[147] 2 Timothy 3:12

suffering. We hear a great deal today about tribulation. You hear some people ask, "Well do you believe in the pre-tribulation rapture, the mid-tribulation rapture" and so on, dividing and splitting further and further. And it does not trouble me greatly because it all depends upon the source of the tribulation. There is nothing in Scripture that I can see that indicates that the Church, His Body the Church, will experience the wrath of God that will be poured out on wicked men. So if your definition of tribulation is God's wrath poured out upon wicked men, then I can assure you that as far as I know the Church will not go through that tribulation. But if the tribulation is the wrath of men poured on God and His people, there is nothing in the Scripture to indicate that you will escape it.

If you were to go to China tonight and find that hounded, hunted, persecuted Church behind the Bamboo Curtain and say to them, "What about the persecution?" What would their answer be? I am sure they would say, "Well if this is not it, what will the great tribulation be?" To them of course, we know it is the wrath of men poured out on the people of God. And there is absolutely no reason whatever to think that we shall ever be immune to that. We have been spared, but I was talking with our brother, Stacy Woods, when he was here, at great length. And he used the statement, made the statement, and repeated it over and over again. "The world, America, the United States, is ripe for judgment, ripe for tribulation." I do not know from whence it will come, or if it will come. I have to agree with him, that we are ripe for judgment.

But I see no reason why one nation of all nations of the earth should flaunt God, His righteousness and His Law, and long escape the just recompense of reward. Now, I do not want it to come. Personally, I do not like to be hurt. And I am sure you do

not. But He wants you to know that they that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

May I remind you again, there is a personal application of this to you, for we are a minority. And the proportion of evangelical Christians becomes increasingly small year by year. The last census that fixes the population of these fifty states at nearly 175 million would mean that less than five million are considered to be effective, evangelical Christians. Now you consider 5 million against 170 million, and you see the degree of minority that we are. Now Protestant Churches are far more numerous today, but I am quoting those that would qualify the statement as Evangelical Christians, effective evangelical Christians, or we might use the word those that have a testimony of being born again. Perhaps some might say, "Oh it is far more than that." All right, I sincerely trust and hope it is. Nevertheless, we are still a minority. And whenever the majority takes it in their minds that we are no longer welcome, then there are ways and means they have of expressing that displeasure. And you are certain of this, however, that whether the land retains the same degree of religious freedom that we have enjoyed now for these 175 years or not, God's Word still remains true. And in your environment and in your area where you are, they that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. Be prepared for that.

Now I want you to see the text as I have said. It is the 7th verse of the 1st Chapter of Revelation: "Behold, He (Christ) cometh with clouds: and every eye shall see Him, they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." This is the text. But let us see it in the context. I begin with verse 4 of the same chapter: "John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come: and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne; And from Jesus

Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own Blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen."

Let us notice first, "Behold He cometh with clouds." I think if you were to turn to Thessalonians, you would find some little insight to the clouds that are here referred to. Let me read from I Thessalonians, Chapter 4. It is that word of comfort at the graveside, but it has its application here: "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren," (and I begin verse 13. First Thessalonians 4:13) "I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the Word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

"With them in the clouds." Perhaps the clouds that He refers to here would be the redeemed in ages past, those that have died in Him that He brings with Him at His coming. But behold He cometh with clouds. And I am suggesting to you that the clouds refer to that company of people, innumerable company

of the Blood washed that He will bring at His coming. But I want you to see now this first phrase, "Behold He cometh."

It is this that John was emphasizing to those that should read, that Jesus Christ would certainly come again. The angels said it on the day He left. This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go. He will come again. And He is coming to judge the world. Behold He cometh to judge. This is the first truth that I wish you to see. The future judgment by our Lord Jesus Christ awaits for His coming. Would you turn to John the 5th Chapter. I have an extended portion here that I wish to read. I think that its relevance and pertinence is such that I ought to read it completely. I begin with the 17th verse and shall conclude with the 31st verse. The Scripture is more important than anything I shall say about it. And I want it to have its full effect in your heart. So hear it now. Listen carefully. You are involved. This is the description of the occasion when you shall meet Him:

"But Jesus answered them My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth: and He will shew Him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my Word, and

believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, Verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Marvel not at this: For the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and My judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true." [148]

This is the divine revelation from our Lord Jesus concerning the certain fact that He will be the Judge, and that His judgment will be inescapable. Thus it is that people think they can avoid the Son, but cannot.

Will you turn to Acts, Chapter 17, verses 30 and 31. This same testimony of the Lord Jesus is reaffirmed by the Apostle Paul. Namely, that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming to judge the unsaved, to judge the wicked. Verse 30 I say of Acts 17: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now (God, understood) commandeth all men everywhere to repent: Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead. And just as certainly as God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, that certainly will the Lord Jesus Christ at His coming judge all men."

[148] John 5:17-31

Now 2nd Timothy, the 4th Chapter, and the 1st verse, emphasizes this same truth. Paul repeats it to the young man concerning his ministry. Notice it: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His Kingdom; Preach the Word." And further with his instruction, "The Lord Jesus Christ who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing, and His Kingdom."

Now the time for His coming. The day that God hath appointed is not known by men. And this is what has brought prophecy into disrepute. Men have sought to establish the day of His coming. No man knows the time nor the season. No man knows the day nor the hour. These are hidden in the heart of God. The angels do not know. Men do not know. And any preacher that proposes to tell you when is usurping an authority that he does not possess and that has not been entrusted to him. Let it be certain that no man knows. No angel knows. The day is hidden in the heart of God. And the instant that God has appointed, the Lord Jesus Christ shall come.

We know something about the world at that time, for our Lord described it. He said that it will be as it was in the days of Noah. Men will be eating, and drinking, marrying, giving in marriage, buying and selling.[149] In other words, everything will be going on as normal. There is nothing wrong with eating and drinking, nothing wrong with marrying, or buying, or selling. These are all legitimate practices. But you see, the thing that is wrong about this is that they are preoccupied with this and not with God. And God is not in all their thoughts.

We find Peter referring to this day, saying that men are going to say, "Where is the sign of His coming. All things continue as

[149] Matthew 24:38

they were from the Fathers. Why we have heard this coming of Christ business. It has been going on and on and on. It's old hat. It is old story. It does not mean anything to us." I know that is exactly what Peter said. Occasionally you hear someone that talks like that. And when I do, I simply say remember that Peter said, "They will say, where is the sign of His coming?" But it is such a time. It is such a time. When men are engaged with the normal pursuits and occupations. When they have said, "Well he tarries till the morning," that the Lord will come. No man knows the time. But we do have reason to believe that "when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads for your redemption draweth nigh."[150] And we are nearer to His coming tonight than any other generation in the past has been.

There is no prophecy that is not fulfilled. The pattern is nearer to full completion. There is less that needs to be dealt with than at any other previous time. Our Lord, I firmly could believe, with all my heart I believe, that before I finish preaching, or before the next sentence is completely uttered, our Lord Jesus could come just as was promised. I see nothing that needs to be fulfilled.

One might say, "Well what about preaching the Gospel to the ends of the earth?" The only thing I know is we do not know what has been done, how much has been done. I dwelt on this some weeks ago, and shall not take time to develop it now. But I remind you that we, our statistics are grossly inadequate, and it could be that while missionary boards are debating about lives that they should enter, the Spirit of God is taking some humble national Christian, leading him down some jungle path, bringing him into that last village, that last hut, to that last heart that says yes to Jesus Christ. And that number known

[150] Luke 21:28

in the mind of God is complete, the Body is complete, then He says, "Now Son." And He shall come again even as He went away. And I believe it could happen now. You say, Well I do not. Let us be friends, nonetheless, but this is exactly where I stand and shall continue to stand. I am looking for Him to return.

But I know this. That whether I am right or you are right - if there is a difference between us - you feel that something remains to be done, and I feel that He could come before the morning breaks, let us remember this: that when He comes every eye shall see Him. Every eye shall see Him. You know someone was saying it was going to be very quiet. Well I was just reading from Thessalonians. You know it does not sound very quiet to me. It sounds like it was sort of an exciting time. Let me read it to you again. "For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout. (I have never heard a quiet shout in my life.) And with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first."[151]

Going to be a bit of excitement when He comes. Folks are going to know about it. And then he says, "And every eye shall see Him."[152] Someone says, "That is going to be hard to do when people live on a globe such as ours." Well, I will leave that up to the Lord. He can take care of it. It has been pretty fast now. He may speed it up a little. But it is up to Him. He said, "Every eye shall see Him," and as far as I am concerned I am delighted if He leave it that way. And I do not know how fast He will travel, but as far as I am concerned it presents no problems. Ever since they told me that they could send a telegraph message from New York to San Francisco in a fraction of a

[151] 1 Thessalonian 4:16
[152] Revelation 1:7

second, I decided the Lord would not have any problem in arranging for every eye to see Him as quickly as He wished.

"Every eye shall see Him." Now what does this imply? This means that all who have ever lived shall be raised. All who have died in all the ages past. I am a literalist when it comes to this Scripture. I believe that every eye shall see Him, that there will be in that day by the sovereign fiat of God, and that spoken word, that restoration. While in Egypt, my wife and I went to the old tombs and I remember there that the excavators had just opened up a section. And as I walked along with a group of us that were missionaries, we saw skulls come rolling out down the sand. There were bones. A group of slaves had worked on the tombs centuries ago, had been killed, and their bodies had been placed there in this crypt and sealed. There was a tremendous number. And so as we walked by, we just pushed the skulls aside with our feet or with our hands. And you know, as I walked by and left my footprints in the sand, I thought of these.

They were men. They had all the hopes and fears, and yearnings and longings, all the dreads, and all the aspirations that I had. And there this little brown skull, four or five thousand years old, representing a human being that had walked in that same sand and left his footprints there. And my Lord said, one day, every eye should see Him. I did not particularly think that skull would be used again, but the person that had inhabited it would be there to look on the Son of God and to see Him. All who are alive at the time will see Him. For He has said that the dead, small and great, will behold Him. Every eye shall look on Him.

Now they will be involved in this, not as a spectator. The people that come will not be there just to witness some splendid event. The Scripture does not teach that. But it teaches

that they will be there as participants, as criminals, arraigned before the Bar of Justice, whose case is to be tried. And the records will be opened; the records of their sin will be presented. Do you want to get insight into what will take place? Would you turn to Revelation, Chapter 20 and allow me to read verses 11 to 15. God in His great love and tenderness has given to us a picture of that day, and He has given us insight into the response of those that will be there.

Now I read, beginning with the 11th verse: "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the Book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it; and death and Hell delivered up the dead who were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." This is the divine preview of the Great White Throne.

Now I would like to have you see the effect of this judgment upon the lost, as we have it in our text. "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him."

This text is more especially directed to the ungodly. You will see this in the words, "they" - those who pierced our Lord in the days of His flesh. I am sure that the Sanhedrin, having said, "Crucify Him," and having arranged for His condemnation and His execution felt that they were through with Him. I am

certain they did. This is the best way to get rid of Him. This is the way to handle a difficult problem. Crucify Him, and we won't bother with Him. But of course we know that our Lord returned again to trouble them. We know that He was raised from the dead, and the Church was raised as the testimony to the fact that He had conquered death. The Sanhedrin will be there. I am sure they did not see Him. Personally, I believe our Lord revealed Himself after His resurrection only to the redeemed, only to the believers. I do not think that in those days after the resurrection, the 40 days that the Lord showed Himself to the unsaved. Now I may be wrong but I do not think so. And they are going to see Him. They said He had not been raised from the dead. They said this was a concocted story. They paid the soldiers to testify that someone stole away His body. They will be there to look on Him whom they had pierced.

Pilate will be there, and the soldiers that he sent, the centurion band, they will be there to look on the one whom they pierced. And Pilate will discover that washing his hands in a basin of water did not absolve him from the responsibility of dealing with Jesus Christ.

Herod will be there. Herod will be there as well. This one that represented the power of Caesar, by whose authority Pilate would send the soldiers. He will be there to give his account to the one against whom he stood. And all the wicked of all the ages, all the Caesars of Rome that instigated persecution against the Church, they will be there. And down across the centuries, those that have hated the name of Jesus Christ will be there. And I would say also that those who live today that have heard the Gospel, and have spurned it -- they will be there. All of these will recognize in His glory, His person, the man they hated, and the man they treated with such indescribable cruelty.

However, no longer will these people that see Him be in a position to oppress Him. They have had their day. They have done all they can do. Finished. And no longer will He be in a position to take their assaults, for He is exalted. As a Lamb He humbled Himself, brought before the shearers, brought to the slaughter, silent. But now He is the Lamb on the Throne. No longer will they be able to oppress, and no longer will He be in a place to suffer. No longer will He allow the malefactors to touch Him, because He is the Judge.

Then I want to tell you something else. Not all the piercing of Christ was done in the first century. There are people that are piercing Him today. There are those, and I say this with great grief --- Mr. Negris[153] has seen a gentleman. We had information come to our office concerning a relative of a Christian in one of our hospitals. The other day Mr. Negris went to see him, wanted to read the Scripture. He said, "No, I do not want the Scripture." Asked to pray, he said, "No I do not want prayer." We had a call from this man's brother, asking us to minister to him. He spurned it. He rejected it. And the day after this visit, the man went out into a dark hopeless, Christ-less eternity. The last word he said was, "I don't want prayer or Bible reading. I just want rest." But there is no rest for the wicked. And one day this man who died, spurning the entreaty of grace, will look on Him whom he pierced by his rejection of the Son of God.

Infinitely greater light was that man's than Pilates', for he has the accumulated testimony of all of the centuries. And if you are here tonight and you have not been born of God, and you have not been washed in the Blood, every occasion that you pass, every day that you allow to pass without surrendering to Jesus Christ is but a deeper piercing of the Son of God. And

[153] Mr. Negris an elder in the Gospel Tabernacle church.

should you perish in your sins, be sure of this, you will look on Him who by your rejection you have pierced. Those who reject the truth or those who having consented to the truth depart from it, how much greater will their sin be than the sin of these that have died even with the Blood of the Son of God on the spear they held in their hand. For He said, "Father, forgive them. They know not what they do."[154] But these that have had the accumulated testimony of the centuries have known what they did.

What is the picture of these that shall look on Him whom they have pierced? Will you turn to Revelation, Chapter 6, verses 15 to 17. I would not know just what words to describe it, but allow me to say that it is one of the most startling, most dramatic, and the most moving portions of the entire Word of God is this that I am about to read to you. I begin with verse 12:

"And I beheld when He had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

[154] Luke 23:34

Calling for the rocks and the mountains to shield them from the wrath of the Lamb. A Lamb, meek, quiet, docile, but when that Lamb becomes enraged at men for their rebellion, the wrath of the Lamb is great that men call to be hidden from His face. This transpires at the coming of Christ. But notice what it says again in Chapter 1, "All kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." All people everywhere, and then John adds these words in verse 7, "Even so, Amen." Even so. So be it. John confirms the truth as being the revelation he receives. He also consents that it is right, that those who pierced Him will wail, and those who reject Him must feel the weight of His wrath. And for God to do less than to produce this effect in them would be unfair to His Son.

I think the Apostle Paul puts the matter beyond all doubt when he says, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. Let him be anathema."[155]

But the preparation for this judgment is made clear. First, to the unsaved that would come before the Great White Throne. You say, like the man who died this past week, I am determined to be lost, I have no part in Christ and no interest in His death, and no desire ever to repent, I will abandon all hope in Christ and have no interest whatever in salvation through Him.

What must I do to make certain that I appear before the Great White Throne in the judgment that is just described? I will embrace it. But my friend, you do not need to do anything. Just go on and live day by day the way you are living. We say, "I am not such a bad sort. Surely when God gets there, gets me there, He will put my good deeds and my bad deeds on the scale. And if my good deeds outweigh my bad deeds, then

[155] 1 Corinthian 16:22

perhaps I will come to something like that. But I am not so bad."

There is no scale any longer. You have already been weighed. You have been weighed in the balance and found wanting. The Judgment is already past. It is not something that is going to happen. You say, "Well I am all right. I am in neutral territory while I am alive. There is no danger until I come to death." Oh no, no. That is not what the Bible teaches. The Bible says, "He that hath the Son hath life. And he that hath not the Son shall not see life."[156] It is not that someday you will be lost, if you are sitting here tonight without having repented of your sins and thrown yourself at the feet of Jesus Christ and received Him as your all sufficient Savior, you do not need to lie once more, sin once more, reject Christ once more; you are lost now. Just as lost as you will ever be. And should life leave your body, you would be forever lost. This we must understand. This we must see.

What must you do to be saved? Well first, there is another manner in which you can look on Him whom you have pierced. You can realize that it was for you He died. You can realize that it was your sins that sent Him to the Cross, that He died in your place and in your stead. He was there as your representative, as your substitute. He was under the sentence of your death.

Oh that tonight you will understand that Jesus Christ loved you and washed you from your own sins in His own blood. If this truth can lay hold upon you, that He loved you. The Lamb died; the Lamb shed His blood; the Lamb poured out His life to redeem you. He did not come to judge the world. Your world was already under the sentence of death. He will come again to

[156] 1 John 5:12

judge the world, but He did not come the first time to judge it. He came to save the world, not to judge it. It was under the sentence of death.

My friend, people tell me -- and how erroneous I view it -- that the sin that sends a man to Hell is the rejection of Christ as Savior. I cannot believe it. I do not believe it. If Christ had never come, the world would have perished. Do you see? He did not come into the world to condemn the world. He came to save the world. Men do not go to Hell because they reject Christ. They go to Hell because they are sinners, because they are rebels, because they are monsters of iniquity. And rejecting Christ is just the proof of their insanity. It does not change anything except the possibility of being saved.

The reason people are lost is because they are sinners. And the reason people are saved is because they see they are sinners that deserve to be lost, and come to Jesus Christ, and see a fountain of cleansing, and the fountain of His blood. And sinners plunged beneath that Blood lose all their guilty stains.

You have one of two alternatives. Acknowledge your crimes, acknowledge your sins, throw yourself at the nail pierced feet of the Son of God, know the cleansing of His Blood, know the washing away of the stains that destroy, and live. Or, do nothing and die. God has ordained that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. He only gives you an option as to when. You do it tonight. Do it now. Come to Christ. Bow before Him. Bend before Him. Acknowledge your sin. Acknowledge the justice of His judgment. Be forgiven. Be cleansed.

What is the invitation that He gives? Listen to it, so sweet. And the Spirit and the Bride (the Church) say come. Come. Come to the Savior. Make no delay. And let him that heareth say, Come.

And let him that is athirst, Come. And whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely. Fourfold invitation. The Spirit, the Holy Spirit, God says come. The Bride, the Church, says come. The one that hears, even though he doesn't himself come says come. And the one that is athirst is invited to come. And whosoever will, let him come and take of the Water of Life freely.

You must meet Christ. He is coming again. You are going to see Him. You are either going to stand before the Great White Throne and have the books opened and found your works condemn you, and your name not written in the Book of Life. Or, you are going to come, repent, believe, be saved, and have your name written in His life. Lord, I care not for riches, neither silver nor gold. I would make sure of Heaven. I would enter the fold. In the Book of thy Kingdom with its pages so fair. Tell me, Jesus my Savior, is my name written there. He is coming, you know. "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen."

This is God's Word. The Second Coming of Christ as He comes for Judgment of the wicked dead. There is only one course. First, if you are here unsaved, come now. In just a moment our Brother is going to lead us in singing three stanzas of "Just As I Am Without One Plea But That Thy Blood Was Shed For Me, And that Thou bidst me come to Thee. Oh, Lamb of God, I come, I come."[157] You either come to the Lamb and live, or you come to the Lamb who in wrath shall judge you and die. But you must meet the Lamb. Meet Him now and live. Meet Him then and perish. But you will meet the Lamb.

[157] Just As I Am, Without One Plea (Words: Charlotte Elliott, 1789-1871; Music William B. Bradbury, 1816-1868)

Behold He cometh. Will you not come now? While the Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." While him that heareth says "Come." Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him come. And take of the Water of Life freely."[158]

Let us bow in prayer. Father of our Lord Jesus, the inevitable meeting with thine inescapable Son is as certain as thou art God. For thou hast said, "This same Jesus shall so come." Thou hast appointed a day in which thou wilt judge the world by that man whom thou hast appointed, in that thou hast given certainty by raising Him from the dead.

Father, we who name the name of Christ how our hearts ought to grieve and yearn and break when we realize we have unsaved loved ones and neighbors and friends whose blood may be upon our hand because we have failed to warn them to flee from the wrath to come, who in that day may look at us and say, "No man, this man did not care for my soul."

But tonight, our God, our hearts go out to thee for those among us to whom thou hast been speaking, who have said, "Someday I am going to come to Christ," but have not come. They are no nearer now than they were years ago when they first said it. May this be the night when they come.

I wonder if, while our heads are bowed, and eyes are closed, if there are those who by upraised hands would say, "Pray for me." God has been speaking to my heart. I know I need Christ. And tonight I do want to come. I am finding it hard, I want prayer. Pray for me. Would you put your hand up? Anyone? Anywhere? I see it. God bless you. Yes. Yes. Another anywhere. Yes I see it. God bless you. Another? Still another? Anyone? "Just as I am without one plea, but thou hast shed thy

[158] Revelation 22:17

Blood for me. Oh Lamb of God, I come to thee. I come."[159] One more.

Father, these hands are raised, and thou knowest the hearts that they represent. Oh, might this be the night of coming, the night of turning to thee, the night of committing their whole lives, body, soul, and spirit to the sovereignty of thy Son, and knowing the cleansing of His Blood, forgiveness and pardon through faith in Him. So guide us in these last closing moments and make it easy for these to obey thee and trust thee, and take their stand wholly and completely for thee. Make this the night of decision, the night when they will put themselves wholly on the side of the Lord. In Jesus name and for His sake we pray. Amen.

[159] "Just as I am, Without One Plea" Music by William B. Bradbury (1849); Words by Charlotte Elliott (1835)

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