

The Victor's Life Food

By Paris Reidhead*

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 labour, 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 laboured, 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 Nicolaitanes, 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.”

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 have been another group in its extreme degree that has found in every number, in every 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 mere 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” (Rev 1:12-14). It is this that I wish you to see: His eyes were a flame of fire. A penetrating flame, a flame that 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 heard 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 this servant Paul said, "Approve things that are excellent," certainly would be expected to find whatever was commendable in this church (Phi. 1:10). 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 labour, 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" (Mat. 7:14). Perhaps we over simplify to the point of absurdity. I would not be surprised but what 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 the 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 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. This word is not just stand complacently, but it is a Greek word - I told you before - *antihistomein* - 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" (II Tim. 2:3). And then Paul concludes his own testimony with, "I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith" (II Tim. 4:7).

Now someone might think that this is a prolonged ride on a spiritual carousel, 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 man's foes shall be they of his own household," and the god of this world sets himself against the child of God. I know thy works (Mat. 10:36).

And then, the next thing we find 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 I Corinthians 15 he said, "Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord for as much as your labour 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 Judson¹, 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.

Another instance of patience that certainly ought to challenge every heart and indicates that this honor role is still open was that of David Livingstone²; 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 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 Stanley³ 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."

Morrison⁴ 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 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.

¹ Adoniram Judson, Jr. (1788-1850) First Protestant missionary sent to Burma.

² David Livingstone (1813 – 1873) A Scottish Congregationalist pioneer medical missionary with the London Missionary Society and an explorer in Africa.

³ Henry Morton Stanley -born John Rowlands; (1841 – 1904) A Welsh journalist and explorer famous for his exploration of central Africa and his search for missionary and explorer David Livingstone.

⁴ George Ernest "G. E." Morrison (1862 – 1920), also known as Morrison of Peking or Chinese Morrison.

And then the Church was commended by Christ because of its discriminating zeal, and its righteous discipline. "I know thy works. I know thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bare 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 pay day does not always come on Saturday night. And when the Scripture says, "Be sure your sin will find you out," you can be absolutely sure that this is absolutely what will happen (Num. 32:23). 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 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. Gordon⁵, who was greatly used of God, as was the Church. Unfortunately, now that church in Boston is almost extinct. Virtually without testimony, W. B. Riley⁶, writing about that great church many years ago, said that he came across a statement by the Rev. Baron Stowe⁷ who was Gordon's predecessor at Clarendon Street, and this statement explained to him why God used Clarendon Street Church for the world blessing. The 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 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" (Eph. 4:13-15). So He commended the Church.

⁵ A.J. Gordon (1836-1895) The pastor of Clarendon Street Baptist Church in Boston for over 25 years.

⁶ Rev. Dr. William Bell Riley (1861-1947) Pastor of the First Baptist Church, Minneapolis, MN. and educator.

⁷ Rev. Baron Stowe - Predecessor at Clarendon Street Church Boston

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 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 inditement 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 labour, 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." 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, the sin of the Nicolaitanes. In fact, it says, "Thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, 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, and 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.

Cowper⁸ 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—"Oh for a closer walk with God."⁹ 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 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

⁸ William Cowper (1731 – 1800) was an English poet and hymnodist.

⁹ See last page of this sermon.

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 receive 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 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." 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 this 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; and 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.

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." 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 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 -- that 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, and 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, 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, and 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" (1 Joh. 1:9). 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, and 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 that one that is here without Thee, has never known joy or peace and forgiveness, will come. Grant, Heavenly Father, that that Christian who has left his first Love, fallen into sin, will come to overcome sin and temptation. Grant that 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 Saviour, be glory and honour, dominion and majesty, now and forever. Amen" (Jud. 24-25).

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

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Evening, December 11, 1960 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.