

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

Supplement 12

Letters to the Seven Churches

Transcribed from a series of messages presented at
Waterloo Mennonite Church, New York State
Revival Meetings 20- 27 March 2006
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*I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation,
I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day,
And heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,
Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last:
What thou seest, write in a book and
Send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia:
Unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos,
Unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis,
Unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.
Revelation 1:9-11*

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For A Conservative Anabaptist Perspective

INTRODUCTION

May of peace and joy and blessing of the Lord be upon us again as we gather. These times of fellowship are precious to the people of God and very important.

I trust the Lord will bless this week with His Spirit's direction
And giving us understanding hearts.

I'm planning to base my messages on seven letters that I have in my possession.

I have never done this before but it happens that you have the same letters in your possession.

We will be drawing from Revelation chapters 1 through 3,
The seven letters to the churches .

Each evening I'm planning to try to introduce some inspirational thoughts from these chapters relating to God and His present work through Jesus Christ in the churches.

It is by the grace of God we want to do this.

Ephesus – The Orthodox but Unloving Church

Monday March 20, 2006.

I would like you to turn in your Bibles to Revelation chapter 1, my introduction this evening is verses one through three. I think this has been close to my heart from many, many years, I feel personally for the 30 some years that I have been preaching I have not preached enough messages from the book of Revelation and sometimes we kind of steer away from it but I want you to notice something here:

[Revelation 1:1-3](#)

"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: ²Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. *(Now to listen to this)* ³Blessed 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."

That is speaking to us tonight, blessed is he that readeth, we want that blessing.

What is he telling us here? It says that the blessing is in hearing and keeping. That blessing will result in a faith with a stabilising hope while facing the trials and persecutions of this sinful age. In view of the triumph of Christ and the ultimate triumph of His own we believe that the Church will triumph and is triumphing with Christ.

Blessed is he that readeth and hear or keeps those things which are written therein. Hearing and keeping what we are told in faith and stabilising hope.

Now I would like you to look at verses 19 and 20 yet in chapter 1 as we introduce these seven letters to the church in Revelation 2 and 3.

It says in [Revelation 1:19-20](#)

"Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; *(We often look at that verse as the outline of the book and then):* ²⁰The 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."

One of the things about this book it often and like the rest of the Bible explains itself and very clearly. We will be reading more of this later but the stars what are they, what are the seven golden candlesticks? Well it tells us here, the stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches. Now keep that in mind as we look at these letters to the churches.

What does that mean, the seven stars are the angels? Well I looked at various helps on that and it is usually thought of as messengers and who are the messengers? Well we believe possibly human messengers or rulers or we could say teachers or bishops of the congregation, those responsible in these churches, that puts it on a level we can understand, those responsible as God ordained it so and then to the seven churches very simple we understand that. Like I said the golden candlesticks represent seven churches and like that golden candlestick always in the scriptures the churches are pictured in purity.

The churches also function as light bearers, the golden candlesticks holding forth the light, the Word of Truth. In Matthew 5 Jesus brought this thought up again He says: Ye are the light of the world, the churches, [\(Matthew 5:14\)](#) God's people are the light of the world. Light gives illumination, we don't appreciate is enough because we live in a lighted world we have light wherever we go, but when you are in total darkness like we drove in last night well it is awfully nice to have light and it always illuminates the path, it helps us to understand where we are going, And that is the Church, it is a beautiful picture of Jesus the light of the world.

There are three things that come into all these letters.

Number one is this "*I know*". That is common, I know. God knows about the Waterloo Mennonite church, He knows that there is a congregation at Waterloo, and we believe that God knows each member at Waterloo, yes, God knows what is taking place this evening, God knows where my thoughts are, God knows why I came tonight. God knows my needs, your needs better than what we know them and God knows the answers to those needs and we are going to by His grace look at some of those answers.

God knows. I know.

Number two another phrase common to each letter is: *“I will”*.

He says a number of times I will do this and when God says that He does that, it is not an empty statement.

Number three another common phrase in each letter is: *“He that has an ear let him hear”*.

What happens to truth in my mind, in my heart? Do I take, do I receive truth within me, does it just tickle my ears and make me feel good or does it touch my heart? He that has an ear let him hear is not an off-the-cuff statement that yes we should be listening, No rather it means that he that heareth these things of Mine and doeth them I will liken him to a wise man that builds his house upon the rock. That is what he is saying, he that has ears let him hear or let him do them.

Hearing in this context is meaning that we take it to heart. This is my message, this message is to my needs. Yes we can think of other needs in the congregation and we do sometimes but everything that we put on somebody else will finally not do us a whole lot of good except make us feel good that somehow maybe I am better than him and that doesn't do us any good either.

You know that is the general tendency I have said long already, knowing human nature it doesn't matter where the person is or where you find him in the heathendom of Africa or the United States, anywhere, any family, any home, any country, people have a tendency to say I must be pretty good because this person over here is worse than I am. And what good does that do any of us?

People justify themselves and in fact Paul says in second Corinthians: They that compare themselves among themselves are not wise. ([2 Cor.10:12](#)). Because we are finally building on something, we are building on since when we do that, trying to make themselves feel good, we need to again and again come back to the scriptures the word of God and make personal application and thence bow our heads like Isaiah did in Isaiah 6 and say: Woe is me.

The brother earlier mentioned about this going to church, I'm a little older than our brother yet and I agree 100 percent, our family ties grow in relationships and also with our Father in heaven and with His people, that

becomes a bond, a tie that grows in experience and as we apply the Word to our hearts it brings, it helps, actually what it does I feel it more all the time it makes us feel more like Isaiah insufficient for the work that He has called us to and less capable of doing His will because God is so holy and just and righteous and so perfect and we are mortal.
He that hath an ear let him hear.

Another fact, I implied it earlier but I want to mention it again, these messages do tell us that Christ's does dwell in the midst of His churches on earth, He does dwell in their midst. Now it doesn't say that He dwells in the midst of all churches but He dwells in the midst of His churches, His called out people, His Bible believing people.

Now coming more directly to the first church.

I told you we were going to use the seven letters to the churches and since they are letters we are going to say to whom they are written and each one we are going to give a title.

The first one is written to Ephesus, you have that in [Revelation 2:1-7](#) and Ephesus we would call the orthodox but unloving church. Orthodox but unloving.

They had a lot of things looking good for them but something was happening inside, outwardly they probably looked as good as any church existing at those times maybe not but it probably did, orthodox speaks of that and we must be orthodox, but beware lest we lose the love of God in our hearts.

And so it is written to Ephesus the orthodox but unloving church and the letter is written or it is from Christ and again we are going to give a title to each message for Christ and in this case we have Him as the faithful companion. A faithful companion tells those he loves what the need is, what the problem is, and Christ very clearly does that.

The key phrase perhaps in this letter is the most outstanding phrase is: Thou hast left thy first love, thy first love.

I would like to spend a little time on that thought because it is so real, it is so common, it is so prevalent. As I think of churches today and I could think of thousands of people that I have had contact with in my lifetime,

that sounds like a lot but it is true, this thing of thou has left thy first love and to many of you it is the same thing it comes close home, drifting.

In fact the scriptures are clear that in the end times there will be a great falling away, well where does that start? Well right here, right here. The sin of departure from heartfelt affection for the Lord our righteousness that is the key, that's the key. And we talk about the Church as our brother did, we talking about a Head, we talk about the body, we are talking about an organism not just an organisation, we are talking about a living organism, it is real there is nothing on earth like it, nothing.

Departure from heartfelt affection for the Lord our righteousness.

I have this against you Jesus said that you have abandoned or lost your first love. What a sad commentary.

There is a song that many of us know by heart, the title reads "Oh for a closer walk with God" and one of the verses says: "Where is the blessedness I knew when first I saw the Lord." That is a thought that went through my mind many times in my Christian experience I come back to that and think of that, it is a good thought to think on where is it, what has happened?

I would like to spend a few moments on that this evening.

There are young people here, there are older people and that is a thought that strikes a chord in our own hearts and we could ask that question: Where is that blessedness? We could call it the spontaneous affection we had at the first when we met the Lord and those feelings many, many of us can relate back to that, but did you hear that word I said feelings, feelings of spontaneous affection. At that point our feelings probably run about as high as at any point in life in our Christian life, maybe that is saying too much, but they do run high because of the change from a lost, rejected, condemned condition into a blessed relationship when we meet with God, the feelings run strong.

When we instruct our classes for baptism in one of the lessons I have three words down; fact, feeling and faith. Fact, feeling and faith.

Feeling, we live with feelings, we need feelings of those three words we can ask: Which is the most important or the least important? Feelings would be the least we cannot build on feelings only.

Now the facts of our conversion are real.

The fact of conversion is real, it requires faith, it requires just as much faith to live the Christian life as it did to be born again. The feelings will not always run that high. Where is the blessedness which I knew when I first saw the Lord?

I would like to emphasise the thought here in relation to feelings. How do we discern where we are at today in relation to our first love? I would say the way that we determine that is our soul refreshing view of God and that means our devotion to God. If it is a chore to go to church, if we don't have time for personal devotion, if we don't know what it is to meditate on the things of God in the Scriptures, if we don't enjoy singing the songs of the church and fellowship to be with the people of God we have every right to be alarmed to what is happening.

But if our loyalties are established, this is my people, this is my Father in heaven, this is His and my Word, this is His and my church and I say that understanding that and we mean it I would say then that we are growing in our Christian experience. Maybe the feelings aren't running as high as they did at one time but the devotion is there, our interests are there, our love is there, we love God and His Word and we hate evil, we love fellowship with God and His people, we are not impressed with things of the world that time and sense will destroy.

And so I trust that those few thoughts can help us in relating to this question of our first love.

[Revelation 2:5](#) tells us: "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."

I really should read this whole passage and will do that at this time and then come back to this thought. [Revelation 2:1-7](#)

"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; ²I 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: ³And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. (See the orthodox aspect of this church?)

⁴Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first

love. ⁵Remember 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. ⁶But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷He 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."

Certainly a tremendous message we have there and as I said when there is a falling away that needs to be repented off..

Unwavering love as Jesus implies there, unwavering loyalty to the Lord is the evidence of true spirituality. We take that first in life that is of utmost importance, to leave it is the first step toward a serious fall and our removal from our place in Christ's body and His Kingdom. He says I will come unto thee quickly, verse five, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place except thou repent.

Thank God that there is a place of repentance if we find ourselves in this place.

Now I would like to spend a little time on the deeds of the Nicolaitans.

This thing here is something we do and face today, notice verse six, "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate."

This is interesting, you know they were right on so many points but there was one thing wrong and we need to hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans also.

Now what are they? Well as I would understand it the Nicolaitans represent a people or a party attempting to introduce a false freedom into the Church, a false freedom and he introduces that thought perhaps in verse two and he says there: "Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." A false freedom.

They abused that grace which led to lasciviousness and I'm going to identify that by looking at two other books right close by, second Peter chapter 2 maybe can help us see what kind of a people they were, talking about Balaam here:

[2 Peter 2:15-16](#)

"Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam *the son* of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

¹⁶But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet." Verse 19 also of the same chapter

[2 Peter 2:19](#)

"While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage."

We have plenty of groups today talking this kind of language.

Turning over to Jude verse four:

[Jude 1:4](#)

"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." Verse 11 of the same book,

[Jude 1:11](#)

"Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core."

It is tragic, it is tragic, abused grace, lasciviousness and yet this thing is threatening the Church today as much as it ever did, as much as it did Israel, as it did the early church and in fact I think we have more of that kind of thing going on today than we ever did, Convenience Religion I call it. They preach the Gospel, they preach the grace of God but simple doctrinal obedience is lost, disciplined lifestyle is lost, if you're born again you don't need discipline, the grace of God teaches us and on and on, a convenience gospel, it sounds so good and so right.

One text that has helped me many, many times in relation to these things and we have been exposed to it perhaps more than some of a lot of you, we were exposed to in early in our marriage and then in Lancaster Conference too, we need to go beyond how things sound and I have said many a time that the earmark as to who the people of God are whether they are reproducing the faith as I introduced it in the opening of the service this evening, is it something that will work on to the coming generations or not? That often answers your question quickly, it looks good, it sounds good and a lot of your modern groupings as I see it are no different than those that operated 20, 30, 40 years ago, it is a different name but it is operating

under the charismatic thought patterns and there is a lot of sound preaching, conversion. I sat in Madison Square Gardens early in our marriage, we went on a bus trip to Madison Square and there was Billy Graham preaching to thousands of people, hundreds went to the altar, he preached an evangelistic message like we would hear, very, very impressive, hundreds of people went to the altar. What is wrong I said when we went home, what's wrong?

I decided if people, and I don't doubt that some were born again that night, but I said born to die. The evangelists their concept was once saved always saved, so what? Nobody to follow-up, no churches to follow up, nobody there to nurture. What did we have? Cheap grace.

Now I don't want to talk against something that God can do, it might open a few eyes I hope it did and it possibly did but for many it didn't work and I could illustrate a lot of other things in our lifetime that sounded very good.

One time we went to a tent campaign in Lancaster because there were hired men working for us, they had a teenage evangelist at that time and this was very emotional but when we went home we decided that what did he really say? Well very little but "Praise the Lord" and a few other statements and it was quite a time.

What did it produce? I do not need to tell you.

This kind of thing is so prevalent today and the Bible says it is going to be. Having abandoned the right way in obedience to the Lord, obedience to the Word, he that heareth these things of mine and doeth them I will liken him to a wise man. It is the doing not only hearing, they have gone astray, they take the course of easy world conformity if you please, they were if you please like a hireling prophet who is willing to commercialise his gift, that is what Balaam represented and many of them do today, hireling prophets willing to commercialise their gifts for a profit, for people, for a following, but finally the Bible says he loved the wages of unrighteousness.

Now I would just like to point out five points here from this.

The promise, we could say the promise or the premise from which they work, it describes it here as wells without water a symbol of spiritual life and yet complete emptiness, wells without water, the pretence is there, saying it right perhaps but nothing to build on. (2 Peter 2:17)

Tempest driven clouds. Well what is that? Well that is something very unstable, very unstable, driven by the tempest. Unstable in spiritual issues, unsound doctrinally when it comes to doctrine. I have said already that a lot of our Mennonite relatives and friends that we grew up with, that we related to are producing a generation that is doctrinally ignorant. They are church people, they know a lot, they talk a lot about church but they are doctrinally ignorant, a generation that knows not the faith, tempest driven clouds unstable spiritual interests or issues.

Thirdly in the gloom of darkness. Spiritual ignorance, in the gloom of darkness. If the light being in you is darkness how great is that darkness. Not understanding the ways of God and truth and righteousness, making great claims but living in ignorance.

And then finally he speaks of great swelling words. (2 Peter 2:18) Swelling words that means that they have an attraction, they are very attractive, it is impressive, people are taken in, caught unawares and driven with the winds if you please, very attractive, fleshly attraction but it is open deception. I think of first Corinthians 13, though I speak with the tongues of angels and have not charity I am become as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. (1 Corinthians 13:1)

Unless we have a solid premise to build on it is all empty intellectualism we would say, very impressive but what is the product? And then finally under the guise of liberty yet under the bondage of sin. Talking about a freedom but bound in sin, nothing there to deliver.

Now coming back to our text passage we would like to notice a thought here. Verse seven: "He that has an ear let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches. He that has an ear let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches and to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

What is the promise here?

You may turn with me to Revelation 22:1-2 and we want to see another thought relating to this, one of the most blessed chapters of the Bible, "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God (isn't that a fresh thought a breath of fresh air after reading some of the things just shared?) Clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. ²In the midst of the street of it,

and on either side of the river, *was there* the tree of life, which bare twelve *manner* of fruits, *and* yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations."

He that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life.

Are we hearing tonight, did we hear this message, does it come from God, does it speak to our hearts? There is something maybe we didn't notice in this chapter in this verse: But he that has an ear let him hear.

I'm going to call that the universal call to repentance, the universal call to repentance.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, the universal call to repentance.

(John 3:16)

Not only that but he that has an ear to hear I may say is a universal call to faithfulness. If we have taken care of the repentance, if we have not lost our first love then he is calling us to faithfulness, he that has an ear let him hear. He is calling tonight for every one of us to give our hearts completely to him in faithfulness. Faithful is he that called that he will also do it.

Furthermore he that has an ear to hear is the universal call to righteousness and holiness.

It is our call tonight. God would have every man come to repentance and live and holiness of life and then the promise of the tree of life, the healing may I say this evening, the healing of the nations to whosoever. The place where people can find an experience eternal life God of the Father through God the Son, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29) all men everywhere can find this and live under this promise and have that curse removed, the curse of sin and damnation and separation that would have God remove the candlestick out of his place unless there is repentance we can have that removed and have our relationship right with the Lord and finally the redeemed will submit to God's sovereignty as His, may I say it, bond servants.

We will have this man rule over us, we will as it were come to the doorposts and have an awl gone through our ear, (Exodus 21:6) we are willing to be a servant like the slave that was bought for a high price and trembling he came to his new master thinking about what is this going to mean to me

to serve a master that paid such a price for my life? And the master they bought him to said: I bought you to set you free.

And this young slave man, a good-looking handsome young man, said Master I will serve you forever, wholly serve you forever.

And that's where God wants us tonight: I'll serve you forever.

Who has an ear this evening, do we hear the voice of God, is He speaking to us? He certainly is. There is not one of us here this evening that He is not speaking to and it is where we find ourselves in the picture in this letter that is written for us tonight.

We are going to give an invitation this evening as we will Lord willing each evening. These invitations are open, I believe from the bottom of my heart there is commitment made, we don't look for a lot of emotional stirrings or commitments openly but yet if it is necessary and somebody is struggling in sin, in defeat, lack of victory why it is certainly right to make acknowledgement and asked for counsel and encouragement and to take care of issues that might need to be taken care off.

The invitation is especially for those that sense the Lord calling them tonight, who have heard the message and want to be saved and so as we sing together you may respond by standing to your feet if you if you feel the call to do so.

Let us pray that the Lord would accomplish His purposes this week.

May the Lord bless us as we labour together this week, it is not one man's work.

Smyrna – Materially Poor But Spiritually Rich

Tuesday March 21, 2006.

I said last evening I would in the introduction share some thoughts from chapter 1 then we will be looking at the letter to the second church then after this introduction.

I'm looking this evening at verses four through six of Revelation 1 which start off with: "John to the seven churches in Asia" and that is an interesting thought, I don't have an accurate picture here but in looking at the map I gather that these seven churches covered a radius of approximately 200 miles it is a little smaller in area than the churches in the Richland district probably but not a whole lot smaller and their means of travel was quite different than what ours is so it helps you to put it in perspective.

These letters are representative, I feel they are representative of conditions in the churches in every locality during the entire Church age. These messages are for us tonight we can draw good, solid Bible teaching from these seven letters for our age today I believe that is implied here in verse four of John to the seven churches, I will read the three verses at this time.

[Revelation 1:4-6:](#)

"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 that puts it in a perspective it is not just a very localised time period but it is a much broader picture*) ⁵And 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, ⁶And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

I never cease to marvel at our position with God through Jesus Christ that we can actually be made kings and priests unto God and live for His glory, it is tremendous thoughts. Maybe we could call that God's benediction upon Jesus provision for the Church age and God is looking upon that with His benediction. As you read these verses unto Him that loved us, grace and peace are God's plan and provision for the Church of Jesus Christ, they

come from God that Father, who is, who was and is to come, the eternal everlasting Father.

This present church age is not lonely at all we have the record of history to build on and to inspire us how God is working with His people throughout the Church age and I think that is in focus there. The unchangeable, the eternal, the self existing one is that God we serve.

It speaks here of the seven spirits here you notice, from the seven spirits which are before the throne, I'm not sure what all that implies but seven certainly symbolises completeness that is the complete number, or the perfection of the triune godhead, you have God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit in focus here and the perfection, the beauty and the completeness of the godhead.

I think that's all I'll share this evening on chapter 1.

Let's look at chapter 2 we are looking at verses eight through 11.

[Revelation 2:8-11](#). "And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; ⁹I 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. ¹⁰Fear 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. ¹¹He 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."

Now as I said last evening each evening I'm going to point out who the letter was written to, it was written to Smyrna and we would define that as a materially poor but spiritually rich church, materially poor but spiritually rich, and we have church like that today as well.

The letter is written from Christ the living Saviour, we noticed that in verse eight, which was dead and is alive, the living Saviour, He who conquered death, He is living, He is alive.

We could ask the question now: How is life the keynote of this letter?

Notice verse 10 says and I will give thee a crown of life, a crown of life.

Well we notice one thing about this letter that He says the crown of life in verse 10 and verse 9 and 10 speak of persecution, tribulation, poverty, blasphemy, suffering, imprisonment, so the crown of life certainly is the keynote when you think of the persecution and trials that come in Christian experience, that is what it is.

You know when people live with plenty in affluence maybe the crown of life isn't so inviting or so important to them but in adversity and in trial it is that which answers, it is able to sustain us through those hard experiences. In Matthew five Jesus introduced this thought when he said: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake." ([Matthew 5:10](#)) I think that is the picture you have here in Revelation 2, Jesus pronounced the blessing throughout the Church age for those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, they shall experience or have the crown of life.

A few things we would like to notice in relation to the hardships that these people faced as a church here. They probably were the poorest and the hardest tested church of the seven and what is God's provision and promise to them?

Number 1.

In verse 10 we see that God will overrule in the devil's temptations and I think that is an important fact to know for us as Christians, we are tested, the Christian life experiences severe testing but we always must remember that God will overrule, He will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able but with the temptation also will make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it. ([1 Corinthians 10:13](#))

I would like to read a few verses from James one as we think of that. I'm looking at James one verses 13 through 16 as we think of temptation.

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: ¹⁴But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. ¹⁵Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. ¹⁶Do not err, my beloved brethren." [James 1:13-16](#)

You know there are temptations, there are trials, in the other part of this chapter we will be looking at it later speaks of that but temptation is a real part of life and whether it is from within or without it is a fact that we have to deal with.

Number 2. The time of persecution will be short.

In verse 10 you notice it says behold the devil will cast some of you into prison and so on, ye shall have tribulation 10 days. God finally set a timetable in how long this tribulation could last. God set limits and He overrules in those circumstances. You have the cry in Revelation in another place ([Revelation 6:10](#)) but the Saints crying: O long how Lord, how long? And when we read the Martyrs Mirror there is the cry sometimes: How long O Lord will this go on?

But God is always on the scene and overruling in those circumstances and we need to always be conscious of that, He says here you will have tribulation 10 days but be thou faithful unto death.

As He overrules His call to us is: Be faithful unto death.

Furthermore He is also telling us in verse 10 fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer, fear none of those things.

Sometimes in our thought life relating to the perplexities and the natural world scene today we think of what could happen, we might get a bit excited and think will we be able to face the future if, with all the "ifs" that we put in place but God has full control over that. His call is to ask for faithfulness and furthermore He has told us as we already implied that Christians will suffer, that is going to be part of Christian experience and it shouldn't surprise us.

I would like to look now at James five and read an example we have here for us:

[James 5:10-11](#).

"Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. ¹¹Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."

We need to come to scriptures like that sometimes and see the patience of Job. If any of us have been tested severely, and I believe we have, how often have we looked at Job and took courage? We haven't had it like he did yet, and he took courage and the Bible tells us to do that: You have heard of the patience of Job.

Number 3.

Faithfulness even to physical death will be rewarded by a crown of life. We call that the martyrs reward, the crown of life.

James one again verse 12:

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." [James 1:12](#).

You have it there again, the crown of life, blessed is the man that endureth temptation. It is the promise that we have for us tonight.

Number 4 and perhaps the most important as we think of this service tonight in our present setting, the promise is that he that overcometh will not be hurt by the second death.

Verse 11: He that overcometh shall not be hurt by the second death. ([Revelation 2:11](#)).

What is the second death? Well that is the place of eternal separation from God and we have the promise of deliverance from that, be overcomers. That is why we have revival meetings to encourage us to be overcomers and to live in victory and not be caught unprepared when Jesus comes.

I would like to look briefly here at the opposition we have in this passage, there is some strong language given here.

You know it says in verse nine, the Jews that were fighting them we could say were of the synagogue of Satan, Jews of the synagogue of Satan. ([Revelation 2:9](#)) Now what brought them there, what brought them there? It is a good question. Well one thing that brought them there they were Jews by name only, they were sons of Abraham by name only and Jesus spoke harshly to some of those men He said: "You are of your father the devil." ([John 8:44](#)), The same kind of language we have here. He said you claim to be the sons of Abraham but you are of your father the devil. And these men were Jewish by name but not spiritually.

One of the things that we need to be able to discern in Christian life whether people who profess the name of Christ are walking by it or whether it is just an outward appearance but inwardly they are ravening wolves trying to destroy the house of God. ([Matthew 7:15](#)).

These men apparently bitterly blasphemed Christ as they called Him "the hanged one" that is blaspheming, you know making fun of the Cross and they opposed Christianity, they opposed truth and righteousness therefore God rightly has said they are of the synagogue of Satan. They didn't devise that name, that wasn't coined by them, they professed to be the people of God, they were God's chosen people, but God said that's what the synagogue was it wasn't what they said. That does touch us tonight again.

I would like to read first Timothy four as you think of that.

We live in a wonderful, tremendous time and yet we are tested probably like the churches never were before and we are looking at a picture similar to this in [1 Timothy 4:1-2](#)

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; ²Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron."

And we could go on but that is what we are talking about. What he is saying here is that these are religious professors, we think of these and some heathen people out in the world but no, it was like it was with these Jewish people it was men, very religious men and church people and intelligent people, a lot to say but they were giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, they were anti-God. See you notice here hypocrisy. What is hypocrisy anyway? Well it is being something opposite to what we express to being, you know they are professing to be Christians but their conscience has been seared, they have rejected doctrinally truths and like I said last evening following what we called a convenience gospel, and sad to say there are too many bibles today that are written for those kind of people.

I want to talk about that some other evening but there are study bibles, there are translations that leave the doctrines out that are so basic to our

salvation, a convenience gospel, and there are churches building around that, social programs and what have you and it is things that constantly threaten us because it is so deceptive and in many, many cases it is so attractive. It appeals to carnality, it appeals to the natural man and it looks so near right but again and again we have to come back to the scriptures. End time deception is what it is.

I would like to read two Old Testament settings that help may be to define this, I think it does.

[Numbers 16:3](#):

"And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?" What does that sound like, is that familiar that kind of reasoning? It certainly is. You know finally God sets the order, God places men in responsibility; And we are all holy what is the fuss about? And why do you exercise discipline? And you could go on and on, I'll talk on that some or some other evening also.

Now looking at [Numbers 20:2-5](#):

"And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. ³And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD! (*Why did they die? Because of their chiding Moses God destroyed them.*) ⁴And why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? ⁵And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? it is no place...." You might say for us to live.

Who brought them here? Why were they here? It was deliverance but they couldn't appreciate it. Sad, sad, but that kind of thinking is not too far away from any of us, challenging the system, challenging the authority, it is so easy to come into that place and you get a mob spirit going, start feeding on negatives and it is very, very destructive. I often wonder about God's patience and compassion as in how we react sometimes. But it is something that we need to deal with.

Moving on to the second part of a message I would like to look at what are enduring riches, what will stand the test of time? This is a poor church. what are we talking about as riches here?

He says: Thou art rich. The abbreviations in my Bible says thou art rich, that is the riches we are talking about, it is not the common concept of riches.

[James 2:5](#) says those who are rich in faith, that is who we are talking about, rich in faith compared to earthly riches. To be rich in faith places God's people in line for all the resources of heaven. Talk about riches tonight! To be rich in faith places God's people in line for all the resources of heaven, we believe that, are we living like that, is that our Christian experience? Furthermore he speaks of not only being rich in faith but rich in good works. ([1 Timothy 6:18](#)). To be rich in good works is simply be doing the will of God on earth and that places God's people under divine blessing, rich in good works.

Maybe we should look at [James 2:1-10](#) being rich in faith and rich in good works.

"My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons." And here you have that rich problem: "2For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; 3And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: 4Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? 5Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? 6But ye have despised the poor." And then he says in verse eight: " 8If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: 9But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. 10For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

Rich in good works, rich in good works means that we have enduring riches, it means that we are laying up treasures in heaven, it is what Jesus said in Matthew six, [Matthew 6:19-21](#), Lay not up treasures on earth where moth and rust doth corrupt but lay up treasures in heaven where thieves

cannot break through and steal." Moths and rust does corrupt. Enduring riches are laying up treasures in heaven.

Why is that so important and true? Jesus said that where you are treasure is there your heart will be also ([Matthew 6:21](#)) and that is so true.

I had to think of that as I was preparing this message, where your treasure is there your heart will be also. So where are our thoughts? What is taking our time? What are we doing in relation to earthly possessions and heavenly treasures? It is a question we face daily.

But actually Jesus said: But seek ye first the kingdom of God. ([Matthew 6:33](#)) That is number one and foremost and then He illustrated it, our choices relate either to the world or to heaven, either to the temporal or to the eternal, eager for things that are seen or things that are not seen. And I don't need to tell you how easy it is to be sidetracked on those issues either. Touch, feel, see, you know the impressions that come.

I think we know this evening that it is through the eye of faith that we can keep a balance on these things.

Or maybe we could ask the question that Jesus very clearly stated at one point when He was in a certain home, He told one person in this home He said: Thou art careful and troubled of many things, he said that to Martha, and then He said to Mary that she had chosen that good part that will not be taken from her. ([Luke 10:41- 42](#)).

Are we choosing that which will never be taken from us? Well that's the choice we make.

Now in bringing this message to the conclusion I would like to ask a question again.

How does the thought here in [Revelation 2:11](#), he that overcometh shall not be hurt by the second death, we touched on that briefly, but how does that relate to [Revelation chapter 21:8](#)?

I think we will do this each evening take a verse and relate it to another verse in the book of Revelation. A number of reasons for this, one reason is to help us better appreciate this book and to better understand it and to whet and give us an appetite for reading it some more.

[Revelation 2:11](#) I will read it again:

"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."

Now [Revelation 21:8](#):

"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

That is how it relates. He that overcometh shall not be hurt by the second death.

What are we overcoming this evening? We are overcoming the sins of the flesh. We are overcoming the things that relate to time and keeping our perspective to the eternal. To be faithful unto death is a choice we make, we make it now and then we have the promise that He will give us a crown of life and too often, too often because of the religious deceptive teachings too many people think that choice is made and once and forever settled but rather it is not that it is a choice that we make continually to the faithful unto death.

We talked about persecution, we talked about temptations, we talked about trials, we talked about suffering, it brings us to the place where we ask questions is it worth it, we ask questions why and we could go on and on but finally we make the choice: Is it God or is it flesh? Is it heaven or is it this world? Is a temporal or is it eternal? The choice we make. And then we have the promise I will give him a crown of life.

We are all making this choice daily as I said in the decisions of life. Our parents young people our parents help us with those decisions but it seems all too soon it comes on to our own shoulders, we have to decide, we have to decide where are we going, what are we going to do, how do we decide? Do we want to try a more convenient way? Do we want a convenience doctrine gospel that will not be so hard on the flesh? One of the biggest struggles today is crucifying the flesh and the question it is: Are we willing to do that or will we crucify the Son afresh?

The Christian life of discipleship is under attack that we are making decisions that relate to eternity. Be thou faithful unto death.

The question could be asked: Are we taking that first step and if not then we are going to give the opportunity this evening. Take that first step tonight.

The question could also be asked: Are we continuing taking those steps, are we in tune, are we in step with the Church, with the Lord. Are our spirits in agreement tonight that is the question or are we at some place where we have come at odds with the church and the Lord of the Church.

You know Jesus is coming for His bride, the Church, and if we are not in a right relationship with the people of God then we are not in right relationship with God either and this second death thing becomes real.

The question is: Is it going to be second life or second death tonight, what is our choice?

We will ask our song leader to lead us in an invitation number at this time and if anyone is sensing a call to salvation why you rise to your feet or if you want help then certainly the Lord has the answer to those needs.

Continue to pray for this is the Lord's work, He has a keen interest in the work here at Waterloo this week and in each one of our hearts.

Pergamos - Tolerant of False Doctrine.

Wednesday March 22, 2006.

Turn with me to Revelation Chapter 1. I would like to take a brief look at verse seven this evening, speaking again of Jesus.

[Revelation 1:7:](#)

"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."

Behold, he cometh. Behold, he cometh. This book of Revelation begins and ends with a promise of the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. It makes it pretty important, very interesting.

John speaks here as if he saw that day: "Behold, He cometh," just as if it is right on the horizon and it is just as sure as if we beheld Him with our eyes.

You know as I think of Jesus' Ascension they saw it and the angels said in like manner you shall see Him come. That is actually what we are looking for, that coming. John saw it by revelation He cometh with clouds it says here as Jesus left and then it says here every eye shall see Him, every eye shall see Him too, the eye of God's people will become a reality, it is a fact of reality. And I often think of this, that reality is the greatest and most important moment in history because the destiny of the soul is sealed then, forever sealed and you know there will never be another opportunity, you know sometimes I change my mind, sometimes I rethink something, sometimes I make a mistake and have to correct it but what is done then is eternally settled.

You know the reality of that every eye shall see Him but to the eye of His people it will become a sharp reality but it also says something else here; to the eye of His enemies it will become a terror like to those who pierced Him and have not repented they shall wail because of Him.

Another thing I notice here it is to all those, to all those that have wounded and crucified Him afresh by their apostasy their doom will be sealed with those who pierced Him. Jesus himself said: Will you crucify the Son of man afresh? Apostasy today it brings tears, it brings griefs to our hearts when we think of the departure from the faith, it is real and the Bible says it will be, but who wounded and crucified Him afresh by their apostasy, the falling away, the great falling away of our generation I think that is why we have warning after warning throughout these letters that we need to be sharp in relation to what this means, this falling away, that departure, the apostasy.

He concludes this verse with the eternal Amen. Even so, Amen.

That statement is a statement of finality, even so, Amen, it is complete, it is settled, it is eternally settled, the time is in God's hand, God's Word stands sure we don't doubt that this evening I don't think. Some years ago early on in our living in Maryland I sat in a barbershop one day and the barber was telling me how strong the Methodist church was in that area, and this was to him something pretty wonderful but then he told me something very, very sad.

We got to talking about the Second Coming, he said: "You know ever since I've been a child they talked about the Lord's coming and he said He never has yet and who knows maybe He never will. Maybe He never will."

He had a lot of faith and confidence in his church but he had lost all contact with God and the Scriptures.

One of the women, the older women of that church, told us she said: "All we hear over the pulpit is politics and world events and things related to times. She said we don't hear the Scriptures, we don't hear the Gospel."

It became a social gospel, we talked about the other evening about a convenience gospel and the old people were lamenting the fact, this is just one area of church life but it is all over, and we can easily get to that place that we'd rather hear something more convenient, something that doesn't stir us quite as much, something that doesn't deal with our failures and our weaknesses and we cannot thank God enough for our sound Gospel preaching and our church life. And I know we make mistakes, we are not proud of our history, but we have a place that we can find security in the Lord in the Word, I am convinced of that and let us be faithful. The finality of this statement: Even so, Amen.

You may turn with me now to Revelation chapter 2, we are looking this evening at the church of Pergamos.

[Revelation 2:12-17:](#)

"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; ¹³I 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. ¹⁴But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. ¹⁵So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. ¹⁶Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. ¹⁷He 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."

So we have the message to Pergamos here. We said these letters were written to seven churches and this one was written to Pergamos and the statement that we have relating in this letter to this church it is: They were tolerant of false doctrine.

Tolerance of false doctrine, it was from Christ and this evening we are looking at Christ as the warring Lord, it speaks of the two edged sword and the sword of My mouth, the warring Lord.

What was this church guilty of, what is the problem?

[Verse 14 and 15](#) tells us it was tolerating we said false doctrine, tolerating the doctrine of Balaam and what this implied was the teaching the people of God should intermarry with the heathen and compromise in the matter of idolatrous worship. That is what that represented. And the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, I know we looked at both of these earlier but we are going to look at it from a different angle this evening, the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes advocating deeds of abomination and impurity, such as in their heathen feasts and free love.

Let's compare this with verse two in chapter 2.

[Revelation 2:2](#) He says:

"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil.." well these people were tolerating that, "...and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars."

The difference is a church that keeps clear lines of separation, that's the difference.

And I know it takes work, it takes diligence and preachers and bishops can get tired of it but it has to be done. Furthermore those lines have to be defined by the church and maintained by the church. God is calling the angel of the church, the bishop, the ministers, the messengers to keep house, we saw that the first evening to keep house in the Church of God, it has to be done and it is not what we enjoy doing.

Our people, our leaders need to hate what God hates. We call this church discipline, that's what we call it and most people don't like that word. We know what a home is like that is lacking discipline, you have insecure children, you have chaos and so it is for churches. It means discipline without

compromise. The first evening I mentioned the fact our children's children are God's plan from creation and the only way that can be done is without compromise dealing with issues and not just letting slip, not letting them slip. That's the difference. Thou canst not bear them which are evil.

Now I know many, many issues a person could say: Well it such a small thing, it is such a small thing, it is such a little fox, why deal with it? ([Song of Solomon 2:15](#))

But to the person that says that to them apparently it is a big thing otherwise they wouldn't make an issue over it, it is something they want.

You know why deal with the hair issue, the dress issue, and we could go on, maybe I should say it this way; my mother has always been very dear to me, she is 93 years old and I have a high respect for her, in fact many of you would know her brother Bishop Paul Ebersole, and I think a lot of my mother, my father was my minister in Lancaster Conference, when we'd left Lancaster Conference that was an awful blow for my parents, today she respects the product of that. But as a son growing up in a Mennonite home I deeply appreciated the church at that time, I said I thought I was rocked to sleep in the Mennonite church, this is the church, the Lancaster Conference, that was the better Conference there were no others as good. We grew up appreciating conservatism but I still remember mother saying: "But you don't expect your daughters to dress like you do?" to my wife.

That was the general concept, we might have enough of that today yet, what does that do? They are the steps that finally led to apostasy, in fact I call it the superhighway into apostasy. If we think that every generation is going to hold a different line it doesn't take long to think through that, the superhighway to apostasy.

And sure it is fine for grandpa to wear a plain hat and for grandma to wear a bonnet but you surely wouldn't expect our daughters to. But why not? Why not?

And we could take that on and on. Clear lines of separation.

Looking at verse 16 of our text passage ([Revelation 2:16](#)) here there are to words I would like to focus on now. Two words, two groups of people.

It says: Repent or I will come unto thee quickly and fight against them. The two words are *thee* and *them*. We are comparing them right now. Thee and them.

What is the difference? It is referring to people.

Well number one, we have to have this straight, God is just and righteous altogether, He makes the dividing lines, we can, we shall but we can't always we are not always as capable as God but God has a clear dividing line, He is just and righteous altogether. God makes a division between righteousness and sin and in doing that He is not ruling that any should perish, that is why He speaks so harshly, it is His will that all men come to repentance.

The *them* in this account are ripe to judgement unless they repented and He tells them there, He says repent or else I will come unto thee.

And then He tells them in [Revelation 2:17](#): He that hath an ear, let him hear and to him that overcometh, represents them as the penitent, He warns them the impenitent and they are under God's judgement because He hates the deeds their doctrine and He will fight against them.

That is the difference between thee and them.

Those that are penitent and ready to face the challenge know that unless we keep our house in order we are all going to be lost and those that keep going on in their defiance they come under His judgement. That is why twice in this passage He speaks of the sword of my mouth, the sword of my mouth.

Now I would like to look at the sword of spirit or the Holy Spirit the Word of God it is the sword with two edges, the sharp two edged sword, it is the Word of God that is quick and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing asunder of soul and spirit. ([Hebrews 4:12](#)). That's the line of demarcation if you please, that is the line that makes or breaks in relation to the Christian life, when they become weak in Gospel obedience.

Some years ago teaching Bible school at Numidia the question was asked one day in the teachers study: What is faith? And Brother Isaac Sensenig said: Oh he said, faith well that is simple Gospel obedience.

It is believing God and taking it seriously and living Gospel obedience, that's what it is. Sometimes we make it too difficult, it is simply taking God at His word and unless we do that the Word will judge us as Jesus said, it is a sharp two-edged sword, the Word and the Spirit they agree as one and it is that which will be our judge.

So we have Christ the warning Lord. That is an awful statement and we don't often think of that but finally He will be our judge the Bible is clear on that and it will be by His Word.

I would like to take a little time this evening and look at what are some similar problems we face today.

That of being tolerant of false doctrine, the inroads of satanic forces,

[Revelation 2:13](#):

"I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is:" and then among verse eight ([Revelation 2:8](#)) thou dwellest we have that statement twice in verse 13, the inroads of satanic forces. I certainly don't have everything listed but I would like to look at a few things.

I like to look at and consider some social issues we face today.

We talked about the Nicolaitans, their problem was related to heathen feasts and free love which leads to abominable deeds and impurity.

One of the threats we face in this century in these times is a developing looseness in relation to social exchange, a developing looseness, that is one of the big issues that they faced but in our present circumstances that is making inroads into the Conservative churches, the social looseness.

That can involve community involvements, business involvements, marriages, weddings, things in our homes. A lot of the older people remember when there was a lot more reserve in homes than what is common today perhaps, even small children when I grew up it was commonly thought that children were to be seen but not heard, that's a little thing and I'm not all negative to some of those changes but that hasn't always served us too well either.

One area that is creeping into Conservative churches that we need to deal with and that is exchanging the holy greeting with a bear hug. Not too many months ago we were at a wedding in what is known as a Conservative church and I was appalled, a number of people went around and instead of greeting the bridal couple they hugged them, that is a worldly cus-

tom, it will not serve us well, in fact it shall not be named among us putting it simply, it will not work, it is a subtle thing but it leads to the very thing that you had in these churches the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. I call it free love or looseness that leads to many other, other vices.

A number of years ago we were at a funeral of a family member he was an Amish preacher, an ex-Amish preacher and there were a lot of ex-Mennonites there. A man, a preacher was there probably related to a number of you and you would have known him but I knew him quite well and he came in before the service and he shook hands with the men and hugged the women, an ex-Mennonite preacher, that's where those things take you. I couldn't believe it.

Talking about spirituality. I say we take a back seat but they were very spiritual in talk. Today that family is a grief. Some time later we were at another funeral and he was in charge, another relative, and after the service bus had parked his children and a number of others brought the instruments in they are going to have another service and it looked well it looked pretty bad the whole thing, he had a long tie and jewellery and he had divorce and you name it.

Where did it start? It started with little things. It started with loosening up.

Another one, another subtle thing that is happening is young couples, young married couples holding hands in public, we run into that pretty strong and getting books, marriage books and things, talking freely about things relating to things that years ago we would have said you don't talk about. We are hearing those things and it will not serve us well, it will not. We need to be more discreet than what some are.

I call it we are losing the Conservative reserve and exchanging it with unreserved boldness. That's what's happening.

One of the things that I think of is that when we were married in Lancaster Conference we had too much of the same thing and I know where a lot of that went today, you'd never believe it, we know where it went and I see it happening in a subtle way today.

Now I would like to spend a little time on the spiritual idolatrous worship inroads that we are under attack from and I'm going to look at some-

thing a bit different as I look at that this evening, I hope it can be understood but I'm going to first of all look at this in relation to holy matrimony. I know Sunday morning we will look at this some more.

But idolatrous worship in relation to the marriage relationships.

I have said already God's design for the home is perfect, for the marriage husband wife relationship is raising a family, God's design is perfect. We don't doubt that but we have made a mess of it sometimes because we are not perfect but when we follow God's design is a perfect beautiful relationship that is pictured in Ephesians 5.

I'm talking about marriage relationships, they are broken, strained, there is a breakdown and this is not unusual, it is nothing new it always was but in our Mennonite homes too often there is a failure to exercise love, we are called to exercise it, submission as we are called to exercise it. I know two mothers today that are grieving over their children's apostasy if you please and in both cases they said when we tried to help them years ago in relation to submission they said: But in this case it doesn't apply.

And they were out of their place and now they are grieving. I could name three just like that, now they are grieving they are crying over themselves but they never learnt to submit to their husbands.

God designed that plan, I did not, but it is perfect, it works.

Husband's that are not filling their roles as godly leaders make it very difficult for wives to find their place and yet we call it holy matrimony and it is a lifetime challenge, it is a beautiful perfect challenge to live up to that standard that God designed and the rewards I can't even begin to tell you the rewards you know that.

But brethren and sisters let's accept God's standard, the Word tells us how that is done and it is so simple but we become so carnal sometimes.

The holy greeting is under attack.

Oh yes we practice it but what about the love for our brethren that it represents, the love for our sisters. Some of our problems relate to relationships, we are not finally fulfilling the very thing that we are doing if we have broken relationships in our churches and I will say in the home and in the church these things are tested and tested extremely, but God has a plan a purpose that works.

In brotherly love preferring one another. (Romans 12:10).

Another thought I want relate to that.

Giving each other the benefit of the doubt and we could go on and on. We have personalities, we have personality clashes we don't all see alike, even husband-and-wife we don't always but we learn to submit and to work together and overlook some things. You know that is difficult when we think that we are perfect and our partner isn't but if we realise our own imperfections and heed what she needs to tolerate in us our wife helps us to be more tolerant. And that is how it is in church life too, some people we get along with much easier than others but family ties are always strong and especially when they are family ties with God as our Father, we be brethren and sisters, (Genesis 13:8) the holy greeting in love we exchange that. Too often the thing that brings the strain is if I may say it, if it is exchanged for love for the world and carnality that is often the thing that makes the problem.

Men, fathers would rather sit at, probably not, but at the firehouse, the local service station and local feed store then go home to their wives, that brings problems.

The holy greeting here is related to our fellowship lines and we'd rather get along with our neighbours better than our brethren and sisters because we don't know them as good and we don't need to work with them as close, I see that too often and we shall get along with our neighbours they shall be our friends but they will never take the place of the brotherhood.

Recently I heard of a church problem in a certain area and I found out that the church people, the community knew all the problems because the church people were telling it all. How foolish, how strange, how carnal.

They were probably still greeting each other but talking about things they shouldn't talk about. Let's not get involved in that.

Holy Communion, love for the church, the people of the living God, I referred to this earlier, love for the church, for the people of the living God I have sought the world around. You know brethren and sisters we can over-emphasise the importance of a love for our family members over the people of God, how God is our Father and we be brethren and sisters and holy Communion means there is a bond there that nothing can ever replace nothing else and we love it and we do all we can to make it work.

That means holy living, free from the blood of all men.

Holy feet washing, again love for our brethren. Holy feet washing means that we bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ ([Galatians 6:2](#)). The law of Christ bear ye one another's burden.

It means, and get this, it means I will rejoice with them that rejoice and weep with them that weep in the brotherhood. ([Romans 12:15](#)). It touches, it grieves my heart when I see people rejoicing over other couples failures, it tells us something. Do we understand that?

The Bible means and the way to tell is that we weep with those that weep, mourn with those who mourn and rejoice with them that do rejoice. When a man excels upfront in leading singing we rejoice with that, if he does well on a topic we rejoice, when he is a faithful trustee, superintendent, school board member, janitor, usher, what have you, we are glad to see him excel.

What happens in our heart when others excel and we don't rejoice, it says a whole lot about our spiritual condition.

Holy feet washing that's what that is all about.

And finally holy submission, the Christian woman's veiling. We touched on that earlier. That means that we will not have that bold independent self-will coming out. Submission. It is so beautiful, it is so perfect and again I didn't device that plan God did and it works so perfect.

Let's keep it that way. If we need to make adjustments let's make the adjustments.

We can often say and I understand that some of us men are maybe not as considerate as we could be and say but it's different for me. You don't know my man is just about impossible and so on. I have known, I know families, I have one in mind in particular he wasn't even a Christian and he was a hard man, hard to get along with, his wife raised a family for the Lord, ministers, bishops, she was in submission.

There are books that tell you of people like that too. You know you think drunkards' wives have done it, in submission, and I don't know how they did it either except by the grace of God and that is how we all do it.

And then I have holy baptism yet, believers' baptism. Let's keep our baptism holy, in harmony with the church. When there is proven harmony at

home, a son or daughter that is obedient and that respects their parents, one who loves who is developing love for the church and her discipline, the disciplined life starts early, the cross bearing life and unless there is evidence of that before baptism we had better be careful. Holy baptism we are talking about.

Does that sit at all with what we are talking about here in this church? It does because finally God is going to judge between the sheep and goats, between the righteous and the unrighteous, between those who submit and obey and those who don't, those who resist and take their own way.

In concluding this I would like you to turn with me to first John two, I would like to read a few verses and let the Scriptures speak to us again.

[1 John 2:3-6](#)

"And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." *There you have it again Gospel obedience.* " ⁴He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. ⁶He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."

Very, very simple yet so profound, so profound.

Verse 14 through 17 same chapter.

[1 John 2:13-17](#)

"I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. ¹⁴I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." *And then this statement, profound everlasting doctrinal statement:* " ¹⁵Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." *It is this verse that comes into focus in relation to the things that I've been saying.* " ¹⁷And the

world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Moving over to chapter 4 a few verses, [1 John 4:1-7](#)

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. ²Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: ³And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. ⁴Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. ⁵They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. ⁶We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

⁷Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."

I'd like to emphasise these verses here, especially the one on try the spirits, try the spirits whether they are of God, that is one of the keys to our Scriptural doctrinal church life, there are a lot of spirits and a lot of people are not very discerning. Let's come back and test them with the Scriptures time and time again it will make a world of difference. There are a lot of things that are awfully nice today, I said convenience gospel sounds nice but it doesn't work, it will not prove out, try the spirits.

Moving over to verse 16 same chapter.

[1 John 4:16-21](#)

"And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. ¹⁷Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. ¹⁸There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." *Here you have the fear that removeth fear, a proper fear of God and the truth a respect for truth.* ¹⁹We love him, because he first loved us. ²⁰If a man say, I love God, (*and I want us to hear this*) I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not

seen? ²¹And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."

Another key test to our relationships within the church.

I am taking more time than I planned to do but I trust it is worth the time but I would like to look at a few things now like we have been doing.

In [Revelation 2:17](#) you have the phrase "new name" " 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*."

We are comparing that with [Revelation 3:12](#)

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him (not a new name but the name of my God) the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name."

A name written by God and I guess it doesn't matter a whole lot as long as it is written by God which one it is, a new name but it will be a new name, in fact maybe that is why we are called Christians today? If we are going to have a new name in heaven we have a new name on the earth too.

We represent the people of God and I look forward to that promise being fulfilled.

In [Revelation 22:4](#) I won't turn to this but it says this: "And they shall see his face; and his name *shall be* in their foreheads."

His name shall be on their foreheads.

I wonder why the world adopts things like that so much. Why do people like the name on the forehead so much today? What is the reasoning behind that?

I would rather identify with the people of God for my identification of a tractor company or a truck company or a seed company, in fact to don't even go together, maybe I will illustrate.

As a young farmer I was a bit like Brother Aaron, I don't know that he ever did what I did but we liked about the same thing and I got an Oliver straw hat and I went to a public sale and I wasn't ashamed of that thing at

all, it had Oliver written on and that was the tractor brand until I met my bishop with his plain black hat and that thing struck me and that was the last time I wore that hat. I thought now what is this, what am I identifying with?

And he never said a word about it to me either. The spirit smote my heart.

But that is why we tell our brethren not to wear labelled caps.

We want our names written in heaven, we want to identify with heaven, we will on earth too we will identify ourselves we will be known when we travel, we will carry out identity with us and we will be known may be more by how we look then how we talk because there is a lot of free talk today but looks don't deceive, well it can but not as quick, we will identify with the people of God.

Did God write His name on our hearts yet the question could be this evening, is God's name written on my heart?

Do people identify us as Christian, as sons of God, as brethren and sisters in the Lord? It is a question.

Is His name seen in our lives, is it seen in our lives? Are we adorning the doctrine?

Now we talked about two doctrines this evening, the doctrine of Satan and the doctrine of God, which doctrine do we adore this evening may I ask, are we adorning the doctrine?

And finally are we engaged in holy living?

Those are the questions that we are looking at, and they are real questions, they are questions that we will answer even now or later that we our answering questions like that.

God help us to take to heart the message again this evening.

We believe in holy doctrines, not by precept only, but by life and example, holy doctrines, holy ordinances, a holy church and a people whose names are written in the Book of Life and if our name is not there tonight there is no better time than to take care of that right here in this service.

Thyatira – The Paganised Church
Thursday March 23, 2006.

I certainly appreciate the thoughts of the devotional. I have said many times the problem with modern church identity is that too many people have never had an encounter with God.

When I'm speaking of that I'm thinking of men like Abraham and Isaiah. When Isaiah met God what did he say about himself? He said: "Woe is me for I am undone, I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people with unclean lips." [Isaiah 6:5](#).

But he humbled himself before God and I'm afraid that too many people that their first encounter with God will be in judgement and those are the kind of people that say: "I have a few things to say to God!"

But in meeting with God there will be no self defence there will be nothing left to defend, nothing. And I trust that we are well acquainted with God and the more we know the better we understand God the better we understand self the less we think of self it takes care of pride.

I would like to share a few thoughts relating to our theme song this evening and I would like to share some thoughts relating to the smallest word in the theme song and I'm going to call that our biggest problem, the smallest word our biggest problem. It says a charge to keep I have. (*A Charge To Keep I Have, Number 488 Church Hymnal*)

I think early on Monday night I mentioned that in worship we become very accountable, we cannot worship somebody else, we cannot make commitments to somebody else, we can't push the message on someone else, when God speaks it has to be very personal and I will emphasize that again this evening but this smallest word becomes our biggest problem and that is because it is due to our carnal will and our selfish pride that's when it becomes a problem.

We blame our problems on perhaps the church or parents, our brethren, our sisters, I have even heard people blame their problems on God. They excuse ourselves from a full commitment, from church membership, from obedience, from church loyalty and you can go on and on by blaming other

people and in judgement that will fall so flat, it will not do us one bit of good. We fail to apply the love of God to our hearts and the blood of Jesus and all the resources of heaven to live in victory and I'd like to say this evening that multitudes have gone to their deathbed in the bondage of bitterness.

And I would also like to say, I have often thought of this, probably the biggest torture of eternity would be to realise that we have shunned the grace of God and have used other people for an escape route. That will be tortured to realise throughout eternity that we have used little petty excuses and rejected divine provision. This little problem of I. Just a little word but oh what a problem.

Our theme verse closes with two more I's where it says: Assured if I might trust betray I shall for ever die. If I might trust betray I shall for ever die.

Let's sing our theme song again, number 488.

A charge to keep I have, A God to glorify,
A never dying soul to save, And fit it for the sky.

To serve the present age, My calling to fulfill,
Oh, may it all my powers engage, To do my Master's will.

Arm me with jealous care, As in Thy sight to live,
And, oh, Thy servant, Lord prepare, A strict account to give.

Help me to watch and pray, And on Thyself rely,
Assured if I my trust betray, I shall forever die.

You may turn in your Bibles to Revelation chapter 1.

Each evening I have been sharing a few thoughts from chapter 1. I'd like to look at another expression in the Bible, looking at verse eight the eternal I AM

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." [Revelation 1:8](#).

The eternal I AM.

The impact of those two words are far beyond our comprehension, the eternal I AM. God told Moses that's who He was and am sure that Moses didn't fully comprehend it either because we can't. The Alpha and Omega, we would say God is the A to Z, the beginning to the end of the alphabet and everything in between that is what Alpha and Omega means. He is the beginning and end of all things which are consummated in this book and certainly He is the real author and the real Revelator.

You know we talk about these letters and I thought about it again this evening as I was sitting here we talk about our accountability we need to accept divine revelation as God's letter to us, God's message to me, that's where we need to apply it.

I'd like to read a few verses from Psalm 139 as we think of the eternal I AM, some soul searching verses a very familiar Psalm.

[Psalm 139:1-14:](#)

O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. ²Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. ³Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. ⁴For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. ⁵Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. ⁶Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. ⁷Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? ⁸If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. ⁹If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; ¹⁰Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. ¹¹If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. ¹²Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. ¹³For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. ¹⁴I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well." Down to verse 17.

[Psalm 139:17-18, 23-24](#)

How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! ¹⁸If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee. (Maybe we should read verse 23). ²³Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

²⁴And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

I trust that is our thought our prayer our attitude this evening as we enter into this worship service.

Moving now to Revelation chapter 2 verse 18 through 29, we have quite a bit longer passage this evening a longer letter maybe I should say, this letter is addressed to Thyatira and Thyatira represents the paganised church and the letter is written from Christ. This evening we have Him as the heart searcher. He knows my heart, my thoughts are far-of the Psalmist said, the heart searcher.

Sometimes perhaps we wish we could understand ourselves as good as God understands us.

One time I was assigned a topic on understanding God, I forget how the title was exactly and I got up and said: How can we understand God when we don't even understand ourselves? But the Word helps us to understand ourselves, preaching helps us to understand ourselves. These messages I'm sure help us to better understand ourselves because it is the Word of God as we said last evening the sharp two edged sword that pierces asunder soul and spirit, it goes right into the recesses of the heart, it does.

The heart searcher.

I'd like to ask the question first of all, maybe I should read this passage again I think it is good if we do that, looking at verse 18.

[Revelation 2:18-29:](#)

"And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; ¹⁹I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. ²⁰Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. ²¹And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. ²²Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. ²³And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am

he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. ²⁴But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. ²⁵But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. ²⁶And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: ²⁷And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. ²⁸And I will give him the morning star. ²⁹He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

I'd like to begin this message from this letter with a question that we find in verse 20 the first word "notwithstanding" What is the impact of this word "notwithstanding"?

He gives a few thoughts of commendation but then this word "notwithstanding" the impact of this is Christ judged took notice of their works, that is the impact, He took notice of their works, He noticed their works of charity, service, of faith, their patience and their growing fruitfulness. Notice that, verse 23b B says also I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. [\(Revelation 2: 23\)](#) God does not overlook our works. You notice here your works.

Verse 26 he speaks of my works and then also we will be judged by our works, your works, my works and we will be judged by our works.

I'm not sure where I've pulled that thought out of but we know that for a fact anyway. Your works, my works and our works, and that always using focus in the work of the church, always. God's work, our work and that is what we will be judged by.

I often think of this and I probably have referred to it before but I would like to take two verses not from a letter this time but from one of Jesus messages really, His sermon on the Mount,

[Matthew 7:20-21:](#)

"Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. ²¹Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

I come back to that many, many times, he that doeth our works, our works is finally what will decide where we will spend eternity. Notwithstanding.

He noticed their works there we took note of that, notwithstanding I have a few things.

Jesus is saying notwithstanding there is a leaven among you, there is a leaven at work, there is wicked seducers at work in the midst of the church and not only that they are tolerated, they are tolerated right in the midst of the congregation.

And the sin of these seducers was an attempt to draw the servants of God into sin and idolatry, the Bible speaks of this even the very elect being deceived, that's what was happening.

Furthermore we noticed this sin was addressed in [Revelation 2:21](#), I gave her space to repent and she repented not, it was addressed and not repented of. Why not? I'll tell you why not. It was under a guise, it was hidden, it was deceptive, it was under the suffer work of Satan as an Angel of light and deceiving people, that's how it works.

Too often when we really count it like this we think that this thing is way out there but mark it down every time these things are happening they are right within the church right within the body. That's what these messages are written for, it is not something unheard-of, unseen or unknown it is things right within the body and it is the subtle work of Satan to deceive and to destroy.

You have it says here in verse 24 "But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan," the depths of Satan. ([Revelation 2:24](#)).

Now notwithstanding what? We need to be practical. What might be the works of Jezebel today?

I'll give you a little bit of history now.

Thyatira represented a commercial centre, a large commercial centre with pagan religion that is the way the city was known, for its business its wealth and its pagan religion. It had many what the Bible dictionary calls trade guides as they called it then, today they are called trade shows, it goes with big business. And these trade shows I'm going to call them now,

are periodically sponsored idolatrous feasts, it is a very, very common thing being done today, very common.

I'm going to say something.

I started farming in partnership with my brother in Lancaster County they were good Mennonites. I well remember talking in the milking parlour about conference time wishing we had time to go to conference, that was not unusual in those days for lay members to go to conference I wish we had time. It struck me one day that we had time to go to farm shows, we had time to go to farm banquets, we had time to go to farm meetings, what's wrong? I wish we had time.

Then I started thinking of this, those meetings in Lancaster County in those times represented three-quarter of the Mennonites or more may be, plain people Church of the Brethren they were plain people too, that's what it represented. A lot of us wore plain suits to go, we represented good Mennonites, but there was humour, there was food, there was commercialisation there were ideas put in our heads and we decided we don't need that we just kept on farming.

We decided we can go to conference we can support the activities of the church and we kept on farming, I'm still farming.

10 years later you could have gone to those same meetings and it was still mostly Mennonites but you could not have identified them. I'm not talking about Conference, that showed it too, too much, but you couldn't identify them. It is one of the subtle tricks of the devil.

Now I'm going to take this a step further.

There were some trade shows recently in our area and this representative told of some what would consider themselves probably more conservative than our church group, two young men that are in business their brother told me that they were going to Las Vegas to a trade show. I said absolutely positively no, why would anyone, these are plain men. I said: Are their wives going along? No.

Maybe they went completely innocent I don't know but I know one thing we don't belong in places like that we know that.

These things, this kind of thing is a subtle means of drawing us into worldliness. A lot, and I know for a fact a lot of these kind of conventions trade shows and things businessmen go there with their secretaries and a

lot of foolishness is done a lot of it, a lot of wickedness. It is a place to get away from home with some freedom under the guise of business.

Does it fit at all with what we are looking at here?

A lot of these people are religious people, it is a very subtle means of the devil. They have feasting, immorality because they are away from home.

I put a number of other things right in with that of farm shows. This past summer we had what they called they changed the name of it to Farm Progress Days and it was right next to one of our family's farms in Wisconsin and it is a big thing and we told our people we didn't want them to go. A few of them went and came back and made things right, they were sorry that they had gone.

It looks very simple. I'm a farmer, I'm enough of a farmer to enjoy that if I didn't know what all goes on with it. You know it is interesting to enjoy things like that but remember what is behind it. Field days, farm banquets, there are many, many things drawing our attention and Satan don't care how he gets us either, to take us away and then it is those people that don't have time for visitation, they don't have time for street meetings and tract distribution and you name it, we are too busy.

I have seen it over and over, we're too busy.

Okay, that's one of the areas we are looking at this evening I said what might be the works of Jezebel today.

Another one might be that I would like to address this evening is that of modern communication, modern communication.

I'm talking about the television, the radio, the computer, cell phones, VCRs. I'm talking about magazines, books, book racks, public libraries and business places and so on. It is one of the very, very dangerous things of our time it is and people are getting entrapped, good people are getting caught because they gave themselves liberty.

In Lancaster Conference we knew what to do with the television, as a church group we knew what to do with it. No I should start back a step. We knew what to do with the movie house, the Mennonites always knew what to do with that, they used to I should say, and the television was taken care off we could handle that one. The movie house was something out there, the television came in the living room, the computer is placed in the den, in

our private den or in the office, and I'm not altogether opposed to the computer but if we are going to have that we'd better have control, we'd better have it under control or it will control us.

It is that simple.

My brother worked in a children's home in Potter County and they had a television set and we went to visit before we were married and I can well remember how captivating that television set was, I couldn't handle it in my home, I don't have a computer and I don't want to have a computer, I'm afraid of it, but I know it can be a tool that can be used, but I question the need in our homes and certainly our children shouldn't have access.

Now cell phones.

The computer has a screen, now the cellphone has a screen and I am telling you there is all kinds of vices available on it. As older brethren and sisters I get the basic one and it is kind of handy and I sure don't know how to get all the other stuff and I don't want to but our young people can.

We are facing temptations today like we never faced. Our young people have things to work through that we never had to work through.

When my wife and I were dating she spent three months with her brother in Florida, we never called each other, young people today think: Impossible! They can hardly even get home from the date before they call. But that's how we looked at the telephone we didn't even think of calling each other, we wrote letters and that was healthy, and it is not all wrong to have cell phones and use them but they represent real soul dangers and I think any father that has a son or daughter at home that has a cellphone you'd better know exactly what is going on, you'd better know, there are too many subtle things.

The dangers we face when we go shopping. Book racks, public libraries, business places, it takes the grace of God and a pure mind to deliver ourselves.

The third one I would like to look at briefly is the false teachers.

False teachers, we live in a very subtle time in relation to the false doctrine. Study Bibles, religious books, tapes, gospel songs, instrumental type music on our tapes, I'm not saying instrumental music I'm saying that type

of music. There is one thing that we need to understand about ourselves and that is, one evening I talked about facts, feelings and faith. Our feelings and emotions can get really carried away with singing, some tapes appeal to the carnal nature so much and a lot of these tapes that are available today will not build conviction but rather destroy it.

The emotional, light loose singing with no doctrinal sense and sometimes not even soundness or a music that could well be instrumental that is played up, it appeals to the emotions, the ecstatic if I may say that, but it is light and it destroys the spiritual and we need to be sensitive to that.

I can give a number of illustrations of people that were delivered from that and I know, I love music I love singing and I know it is something that I can easily get caught up in, but it is something we need deliverance from and carefulness, it appeals to the senses and the emotions but it undermines sound doctrine and sounds traditional worship practices, that's what it does.

What we listen to should correspond closely to what we are singing our services and in our home worship.

I would like to read a few verses from. [2 Timothy 3:1-6-8](#)

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. (*We live in those times*) ²For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, ⁴Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; (or rather lovers of God) ⁵Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. ⁶For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, (that's the times we live in) Ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth, reprobate concerning the faith” and so on.

We live in such times.

And this thing, we will be looking at it more I think tomorrow night, but having a form of godliness. Form is something that stares us in the eye right today right now, having nothing but form and we need to beware of that.

Maybe one other passage yet [2 Peter 2:1-3](#).

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. ²And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. ³And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not."

We live in such a time.

Now moving on [Revelation 2:27](#):

"And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father."

I would like to compare that to [Revelation 19:15-16](#):

"And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

We see Him not only as Christ the heart searcher but we see Him as a King and Judge of all unrighteousness.

Pharaoh made this statement he said: Who is God that I should obey him? ([Exodus 5:2](#)).

Who is He this evening? He is the KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

And we know that according to the Scriptures that it is unto Him that every knee shall bow. ([Romans 14:11](#)).

Now what we like to look at briefly yet and that is this question: What is symbolised by the morning star? We have that in verse 28 ([Revelation 2:28](#))... and I will give him the morning star. Now what is symbolised by that?

Let's look at [Revelation 22:16](#).

"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."

I Jesus Christ, He is the morning star.

The morning star brings day with Him into the soul, the morning star brings daylight into the soul, He is able to shed light on our hearts, He brings the light of grace in of glory into the heart.

The poet says: Once I was blind but now I can see, The light of the world is Jesus.

He is the bright and morning star.

And then he says come to light.

And I would like to suggest this evening that to everyone of us that we would be at the place that we can enjoy the light of knowing that our sins are forgiven, that we are not walking in darkness, that we are not living in deception, that we could experience the experience of peace and knowing that all is well with my soul in our soul. In Him is light and in Him is no darkness at all. ([1 John 1:5](#))

We looked at some pretty dark pictures, those dark clouds on the horizon, I don't want to overly warn but they are there they are on the horizon but they don't need to touch as and they shall not.

Christ tonight is our heart searcher. Like I said earlier He knows my heart, He knows our heart and it is my responsibility your responsibility to answer His call and to live in humble obedience and so we are going to give an invitation number again this evening.

If anyone is here struggling with sin, discouragement or never has come to the place of repentance giving their hearts to the Lord, there is no better time.

Jesus is standing at your hearts door knocking and asking for entrance.

Will you come to Him tonight?

Sardis - A Lifeless Church

Friday March 24, 2006.

May a Lord continue to bless us as we worship.

We in one sense do not come to the well as this woman did she was a non-believer at that time, she was being introduced to the well of living waters but in another sense will come to a well and often, regular and drink of the refreshment that God has for us, the springs of living waters. It is a beautiful picture when you think of it whether it is in [Psalm 23](#) or in the [Gospel of John](#) or wherever the Scriptures speaks of the waters, the times of refreshment. Something that we take for granted in this country water is natural but how often do we take it for granted in relation to the spiritual too and hardly appreciate it enough.

Certainly appreciate the interest of each one here this evening. I trust that there will be a word from the Lord that we can take with us something that we can benefit from and will bless our hearts. God's design and plan is that we are blessed in worship, that we are enlightened in relation to spiritual things and that we are strengthened in relation to our Christian walk and that we are further prepared for eternity.

We are going to seeing out the theme song together again this evening. I would just like to look at the second verse briefly. You know worship is that which prepares us to serve and this verse says: To serve the present age. We are not serving in our father's time, we are not serving during the reformation, we are serving in this time in this age in this present time. Now is the day to serve deserve this present age my calling to fulfil, Oh, may it all my powers engage to do my Master's will! That's a very precious thought and prayer and I trust it is our prayer this evening - my calling to fulfil, Oh, may it all my powers engage to do my Master's will. Assured if I my trust betray, I shall forever die.

You may turn with me to Revelation chapter 1.

For those that are new here this evening we have been looking at the seven churches in chapter 2 and three, one each evening that before we did that I was trying to draw a few thoughts of inspiration from chapter 1. These messages are meant not only to challenge us but to inspire us in the ways

of an understanding God and His beauty and perfection and holiness. The first is we are looking at here are in [Revelation 1:13-18](#) and I will read them at this time. Of Christ here in the midst of the church, in the midst of the church and notice verse 13:

"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. ¹⁴His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; ¹⁵And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. ¹⁶And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. ¹⁷And 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: ¹⁸I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

The impact of those verses I can't fully comprehend but we would like to consider a few thoughts from them. I read and hear we have Christ in the midst of the church, for those of you who were not hear the first night that is explained in verse 20 the latter part of the verse it says: "...and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches." ([Rev. 1:20](#)).

And he in having verse 13: And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man. So there you have it Christ in the midst of the church. ([Rev. 1:13](#)).

That's precious. We could stop and meditate on that all evening those thoughts relating to Christ in the midst of His people that that is exactly where He is in the midst of the church.

That is why we have a series of meetings like this to help us realise our accountability before this Christ that is in the midst of us, to realise the importance of the holiness and purity and spiritual growth and perfection.

Someone has asked the question, you may have heard it before: If Christ were removed from your church would anything change or be different?

It is a solemn thought. Would anything change or be different?

Now we are not talking about using the name of Christ claiming the name of Christ, we are talking about living the Gospel of Christ and we will have that come out later this evening in the message, when the books

are open we will have something to say about that. Would it be any different?

In Christ is in the midst of the church people are humble and open and ready to receive help, chastisement, correction, and direction in their spiritual life, when Christ is in the midst He is our leader.

And another thing I didn't say that I said the first evening is the seven, the seven angels of the seven churches represent the leadership. Some people make a big difference between obeying Christ and church authority, but when Christ is in the midst of the church that is one and the same. In judgement we will be held accountable not only for what our parents have taught us and we rejected but what the church has taught us and we have rejected, that's what it means to have Christ in the midst of the churches, it's that serious, it's that serious.

John fell at His feet as dead when he met Jesus here and when you read the description here you can understand why. I'm not sure if I said at the other evening or not but I have often said that one of the reasons that people don't take religion or their Christian life more seriously is because they have never met up with God yet, they'd never got a right revelation or concept of God and if you don't believe that see what happens when men like Isaiah and counter God in [Isaiah 6](#). It brought him right to the end of himself and that's exactly what it does. We can see what happened to John here when he met with Jesus Christ, he was finished, his life was over as far as he was concerned, he wasn't worthy to meet this glorious one, I fell at His feet as dead, he was overtaken with the awe and perfection and beauty and holiness of God.

I would like to notice a few thoughts that are given to us here in verse 17 ([Revelation 1:17](#)) he says I fell at his feet as dead. And then Jesus laid His hand on him, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last, the eternal one.

We notice here His divine nature, His eternal endless life, He ever was and never will be, the first and the last. Not only that but we notice this one introduced himself as the one who suffered and died, is suffering and death is introduced here, I am he that liveth, and was dead; ([Revelation 1:18](#)), we serve a living Saviour but He died for our sin it is through His blood that we have life and life eternal.

He also introduced Himself as the resurrection and the life, that is very close to us this evening, we also were dead in trespasses and sin (Ephes.2:1) but as we accepted the entertainment through Jesus blood we rise to newness of life and we partake of His resurrection and the life. (Rom.6:4)

He also introduced Himself to us in his endless life, his endless life I am alive forevermore. We serve a living Saviour and many churches around society operate around somebody that is already dead but we have a living Saviour.

And furthermore He introduced John to His office and authority.

He has every right to tell us what to do and how to go, how to walk and how to prepare for eternity.

These four statements that I shared here I would say this evening contain our very life and to doctrine, we build on these facts, we build church on these facts and that is when you have Jesus in the midst of the churches and Jesus is in our midst.

Moving over to chapter 3. We are looking at Sardis this evening and maybe I should introduce something here, I have been taking the churches as they come and if you have been reading and preparing beforehand which is certainly all right it makes it more inspiring for you, tomorrow night not going to use Philadelphia I was planning to decide to hold that for Sunday night but I would like to look at Laodicea tomorrow night and maybe I'm going to try and do something that I can't do that we are going to try and have a message for the youth from this church, and maybe I won't put as much into the, we will draw more from other areas but we're going to that's our plan to tomorrow evening.

We are looking this evening at chapter 3 verses three through six.

This letter is addressed to Sardis and it is a lifeless church. A lifeless church is the title we give this church and again the letter comes from Christ and this evening we have Him as the coming judge, as the coming judge and he addresses these people are trying to help them to recognise their condition and what they need to do and prepare for His coming, for His judgement.

We would call this church, a good description of this church would be what we would call dead orthodoxy, dead orthodoxy. Notice, I will read the verses at this time:

Revelation 3:1-6

"And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits" (*remember that word, that thought*) "the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." (*There you have that dead orthodoxy that thou live this, orthodoxy is very exact, very detailed, very careful in revealing a good image , they have a way of presenting themselves as The Church, you have a name that you are living, doubt hast a name that our livers and he says but thou art dead, you're dead, that dead orthodoxy*)
"2Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. 3Remember 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. 4Thou 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. 5He 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. 6He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Maybe I should back up a bit, you might be questioning one thing I said, I said it is dead orthodoxy that if you notice in the scriptures many times it speaks of conditions like this, it is talking in general terms as a whole, as a body they were dead orthodoxy but as is often the case, and I think we need to watch this, it is often the case in a system like this, the church like this there are sometimes the faithful remnant, a few faithful once and I think that is what we are seeing here because he says they shall strengthen what remains.

Maybe a few facts to this area we are talking about. Sardis was noted for its wealth and the reason was a wealthy town or city because it was in the textile business and it also had jewellery, that's interesting, but apparently they may jewellery and we know people in those times wore jewellery that they had textile industry and jewellery industry and they were wealthy people. And that isn't always wrong yet to Jesus warned various times of

the snare of wealth and history will tell us that too that what can happen. It said they had a name but they were spiritually dead.

In my reading I would have found out that and I think this is interesting, they were wealthy, they had a name and as far as people looking on it looked like a church that was flourishing, flourishing, prominence, popular, probably people flocking in this suits us well we can enjoy our wealth, we can enjoy our carnality, we can enjoy the church members and it won't cost us much, it doesn't cost us much.

It doesn't require a crucified life. It doesn't require giving up self. It is interesting to notice that.

I didn't maybe conclude saying all that I had here that they had a name, a reputation for spiritual life and yet they were spiritually dead, a flourishing church.

I often think of that related to the times in which we live and many, many times in our experience we had to ask questions now: What is right, what is working? There is many, many voices today, many, many churches how can we know them? And again and again I come back to first John three where it says: Try the spirits, ask the spirits, look beyond that outward show and popularity and talk easy talks, spiritual talk if you please. What is the product, what is it producing?

Will it produce spirituality? Will it stand with the next generation or will it not? That is one of the real tests.

I concluded long already the church, the faithful remnant churches are the ones that are able to reproduce the faith unto the coming generations, that is the earmark of Gods people because God designed it to be that way and that's how it works'. If we fail our children we have failed God and failed our mission, it is that simple and we have not been discerning. I want to say more on that later.

This church is called upon to be awake, to be awake and churches like this often are very much awake and alive because there is a strong social program, a lot of activity, but that is not the kind of awake He is talking about, He is talking about being spiritually awake, being sensitive and being able to see the things that we are doing and where it is going to take us. It is not a physical or a passive sense at all but to be spiritually alert to the times and conditions and brothers and sisters if there was ever a time we

need to be alert and awake to the times and conditions I feel it is these times because of the pressures that come from so many sources and areas.

Then He says to strengthen the things, to strengthen what remains that are ready to die.

I had to think of Joshua here. I know this message was written to the bishop in a sense that as we think of Congregational life, as we think of churches, I would like to give this challenge at this point and I'm going to use Joshua's wise words, the book of Joshua where he said: As for me and my house and we will serve the Lord. ([Joshua 24:15](#)).

When I think of strengthening what remains I have said long already we cannot, we cannot build solid churches without solid fathers and solid homes. The preacher, the bishop cannot do it, it takes a congregation and especially fathers that are awake and alert to the times. Strengthen what remains.

What I'm saying is not only leaders but fathers with a vision, with spiritual eyesight that is what we were talking about, spiritual eyesight. Here we have a haze over the eyes they were not able to see clear any more, they were being deceived, the system itself was carrying along and God was not in the midst any more and it is easy for an organisation, an organisation can easily be carried with a momentum of its own system and be dead.

But I say spiritual eyesight, we should be aware of the needs to what it takes to build and to maintain a spiritual household and in doing that in verse three ([Revelation 3:3](#)) He says remember therefore how thou hast received and hold fast and repent. And then we come back again and again to God's Word, we come back to the Scriptures, it is not a plan that we can devise whatsoever it is the Scriptures, that's where we come back, it is the only way. He says come back to that which you have received, to God's Word, keep it, repent of your sin or else title spiritual death. That is what He is telling them here and failure to do so will mean judgement at the Lord's coming.

I would like to consider what this thing means here in verse five ([Revelation 3:5](#)) He talks about I will not blot out his name out of the Book of Life.

What are we talking about blotting names out of the Book of Life?

I am taking it in the negative here. This church as I was saying is pictured deceiving by what we would call nominal Christianity, it is pictured

by mechanical worship, having a formal godliness but denying the power thereof (2 Tim.3:5) a mechanical worship without regeneration... It says they have a name that they live but they are dead. They have the name that they belong to the visible church but they are spiritually dead, they are mere professors having a formal godliness but not the power thereof, and name to live but not having the principle of life, spiritual life, not living by God's standard and they are finally blighted with a severe case of hypocrisy, hypocrisy.

Saying one thing and doing another, saying one thing and doing another. Hypocrisy.

Well you know what Jesus did with hypocrisy in His time and for us it doesn't matter if it is in the home or in the church children can see through hypocrisy better than we think they can. Some of our hypocrisy is running other people bound to make ourselves look good, some of our hypocrisy is to say great swelling words that really in essence we don't believe it we don't intend to live by it, and that is an age-old problem that this church here had a severe case of it apparently.

Now I would like to spend some time on call to watchfulness, the call to watchfulness.

He says the watchful in verse to (Revelation 3:2) and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die. The call to watchfulness. I'd like to in doing this I would like you to turn with me to Matthew 24, we come back again and again to Jesus words and in Revelation here it says be watchful and strengthen. Jesus told us to be watchful. I would like to read starting at verse 36 to 51 of Matthew 24

"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." *(But then He tells us any gives us an illustration here of how these things are going to be talking about His second coming)* "³⁷But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. ³⁸For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, ³⁹And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. ⁴⁰Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. ⁴¹Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

⁴²Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

⁴³But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what

watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. ⁴⁴Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. ⁴⁵Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? ⁴⁶Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. ⁴⁷Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. ⁴⁸But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; ⁴⁹And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; ⁵⁰The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, ⁵¹And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

[Matthew 24:36-51.](#)

This thing of watching is serious.

We believe that Jesus could come tonight and we need to be ready. We believe that it is an ever ongoing call to watchfulness because of several reasons that I will give.

One is that the time is unknown.

This servant here that thieves broke up his house he could rebuild his house but in relation to Jesus coming when that our cometh there will be no rebuilding, wherever we stand, wherever we are will be forever eternally settled. That is the thought that has touched my mind many a time. You know here we are today on this side of eternity but in one moment that will be eternally changed and settled in so that is the reason to watch because the time is unknown, the hour is unknown.

To watch means to be on guard and to be awake, to be spiritually alert as I've been trying to say and what should we be awake and alert to? What is it anyway? Should we be looking up? In a sense yes. But really what we should be awake and alert to is the times and conditions that we are living in, that is what we are awake to. A lot of people would like to hide behind that in ignorance that the Bible is clear that we need to know the times and the conditions and the alert as to what is taking place in our generation.

To keep that which is committed to our trust is to watch, to keep that which has been committed to our trust, there again it simply doing what Jesus commanded us to do in His vineyard and be fruitful, doing what we have been committed to our trust.

And brethren and sisters it seems to me if there's ever a people that are accountable it is us today. When we think of all that God has done for us in this generation, the freedoms we enjoy, our school, at church programs, everything seems to me that we are the most accountable people that ever lived and if we neglect to be awake to those responsibilities and maintaining what has been committed to us we have failed.

It means not only to keep but to observe church, home and world conditions as fathers, we can hide behind our responsibilities of we want to younger fathers, older fathers. Some of our fathers at home are just in the stage of teenagers are not talked to one recently, fathers tend to back off by that time that really the responsibility then is probably greater than at any time in a different sense, but give them sound direction. But I'm saying observed be awake, and where as to what is happening in our household it, in our community, in our friendships, in our churches, that's what it calls that's what we are talking about when we are talking about watching and watchfulness, spiritually alert as to the conditions we are living under.

It means to preserve the faith and not let it slip out of our homes and churches would let it not slip out of our hands and it has happened way too often that people have let it slip but it means to preserve the faith that was once delivered unto the Saints. ([Jude 1:3](#))

I think of yet one in other words another thought, Jesus in the garden told the disciples: What, could you not watch with me one hour? ([Matthew 26:40](#)) and we know it was hard on the disciples but are we awake to the times? They were not awake to the times, they didn't understand what was going to happen that night, they were totally in darkness to it, if they had known what was going to happen would they have been awake? Certainly, certainly.

It was a very, very dramatic experience for them but they were not alert to the times. Are we, are we?

I would like to compare verse three chapter 3 in our text passage now. I would like to look at the Book of Life yet.

[Revelation 3:5](#)

"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."

I would like to look at that thought the book of life. In doing so let us look at chapter 20 first 12, we have been doing this each evening comparing it with other verses in the latter part of the book.

Revelation 20:12

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.

We have a question here. What is this book, what are these books? The books were opened.

I have some suggestions. It says another book was opened which was the book of life and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works. What are the books?

May I suggest, I'll start it this way, I think you'll agree it's God's perfect holy record book.

Number one: God's perfect holy record book. The book of omniscience, all knowledge, it could maybe be the book of the sinners' conscience too it could maybe be that. But I think the book of life, we could call it the book of heaven in the final outworking of it is I believe it is the book of the Scriptures or the books of the Scriptures.

What did Jesus tell us? He said it is these works that will judge you. It is maybe not as mysterious as we think sometimes, I believe God has record books but we will be judged by this Book, these books if you please, the Bible is clear on that.

It is also clear that we will be without excuse and that is because we have this book right with us, we will be without excuse.

This book will not have any mistakes in it and furthermore we will not argue with it either, in fact I think coming into the presence of God we will see ourselves like we have never seen ourselves before, I think we will do like John said he did we will come to the end of ourselves. God judge would not need to say anything.

So that is what I would have to say on this book, the book of life. This is the book of life, to spiritual life and vitality. God has given us all things that we need for godliness and contentment, all things that we need for holy living and righteousness, there is not a thing missing, not a thing.

It would be interesting to quote [Psalm 119](#) at this point, I don't think I will but an Old Testament passage that is rich in the scriptures and many other passages.

We would ask one other question yet: Whose names are written in this book? Whose names are written in this book?

In one sense I could say I don't know, and I won't be giving names this evening, but the Bible tells us the overcomers' names will be written in this book, those whose garments are washed in the blood of the Lamb, whose garments are white, those whose names Jesus knows will be written in the book, whom He is not ashamed of. If you are ashamed of me and I will be ashamed of you Jesus said. (Luke 9:26) So it will be those whom Jesus is not ashamed of and the reason that He is not ashamed is because they are under the blood, they are His sons and daughters.

It says here, I get this thought of not being ashamed from but I will confess his name before My Father before His angels. Jesus is saying that I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels, not ashamed to call us brethren and sisters because we are ready to meet our Maker.

Furthermore it will be those whose works are perfect before God, whose works are perfect before God.

No, we can never be perfect before God apart from Jesus Christ, it is only in Him that we have spiritual perfection.

The final question we would ask this evening is the only question I can think of at this point is: Is my name written there, is my name written there?

The poet very ably penned those words: Is my name written there on His page is white and fair?

These are sober moments for us as we think on thoughts like these, it is almost beyond our comprehension but it is reality, it is the Scriptures, it is the way that God designed it and said it. God is extremely interested this evening and so is Jesus Christ that everyone's name here is written in heaven to the point that God sent His Son to die for our sins that whosoever that believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

God's will, God's design from creation was that all men would come to repentance and enjoy newness of life and have their names written in heaven. That's God's plan and according to the Scriptures that invitation is just as good this evening as it ever was.