

The Candlestick - Smyrna

by Carter Conlon

The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual richness and heritage, even in the midst of suffering and poverty, and reminds listeners that God promises to give them the victory in their trials.

Duration: 47:32

Scripture: Isaiah 40:1, Isaiah 40:28, Romans 6:5, Romans 8:15, Romans 8:18, 1 John 3:2, Revelation 22:7

Topics: "Smyrna"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher addresses the fear and suffering that believers may face. He emphasizes that the devil may try to imprison and test them, but assures them that it will only be for a short season. He reminds them of the fleeting nature of life and the warning against placing too much value on earthly riches. The preacher encourages the congregation not to believe the lies of the devil, who wants to drive them into despair and convince them that God has forsaken them. Instead, he urges them to turn to God wholeheartedly and find the richness of Jesus in their trials.

Transcript

Traces of one of these churches we're about to speak of tonight, the Church of Smyrna. And I believe with all my heart that some for sure will find traces of that church within your life. Father, I thank you tonight, O God, for the anointing of your Holy Spirit.

I thank you, Lord, that you are continuously taking us step by step. You're building us, O God, image to image, glory to glory, strength to strength. Lord, there is no turning back in you, but a continual going forward.

And I thank you tonight that even when we don't think that we're going forward, we are, as long as our hearts are towards you, O God. I thank you for your sovereign protection. I thank you for the anointing that breaks down every misconception of Christ and destroys the works of darkness.

Lord God, I'm asking tonight that you would crush every weapon of evil that has been formed against any child of God in this house tonight. Lord, that you would send it forth your word like cannon fire into the ranks of the enemy and release all in their mind and heart who are being cast down and tormented by the powers of darkness. And Father, I thank you for your liberating word tonight.

I thank you for the healing oil of Jesus. In your precious name, Amen. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Revelation chapter 2, beginning at verse 8. And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write these things, saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive. I know thy works and tribulation and poverty, but thou art rich.

And I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison that you may be tried.

And you shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith.

Unto the churches, he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death. An interesting thing about this particular church is that it's one of only two in the book of Revelation that the manifestation or the manifested presence of Jesus didn't rebuke. It was a church that had been birthed in difficulty, a church that was going through difficulty.

Jesus said in verse 9, I know your works. I know your trial, your tribulation, your difficulty, your poverty, but you are rich. And you see, when Jesus comes into the midst of his church, we studied a week ago there was a church called Laodicea that thought they were rich.

But when the presence of Christ came into that church and exposed the roots and intents of the heart, a church that thought they were rich found out that they were indeed poor in the sight of God. Nevertheless, a church that was poor in the sight of man and seemed to be down-fraud and perhaps even being plowed over in many respects by the works of the evil rulers of that day, that church, when Jesus came into the midst of that church, his presence exposed a deep and rich spiritual heritage. Now, I know if you have an open heart tonight, we're going to examine the scripture and find that there are many even sitting here tonight that you have that heritage.

And Christ is about to speak some words to you and he's about to lift you out of a place of difficulty and give you an understanding of why you are where you are and where it is that you're going. Verse 10, he tells this church, he said, don't fear those things that you're going to suffer. The devil will cast some of you into prison.

In other words, he's going to take you and put you into a place of captivity that you may be tried. You shall have tribulation ten days. In other words, it's going to be a short season.

It may seem long, but remember the words of the Apostle James. Our life is just a vapor. It appears for a season and then it vanishes away.

It was in another scripture. There's a warning to the rich man who appears and seems to have all kinds of glory. But just as the flower of the grass in a moment, in a season, he just fades away and he's gone and he's no more.

Even though life seems long on this earth sometimes, brothers and sisters, in the realm of eternity, it's just a vapor of smoke. A billion years from now, we're going to be fellowshiping together in heaven and looking back and marveling at how short this life really was. We thought it was so long.

That's simply because we're in the confines of this carnal body. Every day sometimes seems like a long time, especially if you're knowing what it is to suffer and to go through some kind of tribulation. Jesus said,

I know your works.

I know your tribulation and your poverty, but you're rich. There was a richness found in this church. The remnants of this church are found throughout all ages and indeed I'm sure are here in this building tonight.

Don't fear those things that you're going to suffer. Now, we're not in this society in the Western world literally cast into prison for the gospel in this hour, at least that we're living in. I'm not sure that that's not going to come at some point in the future.

Now, throughout history, we have known churches have suffered. There have been difficulties and trials and times of imprisonment. History and tradition tells us that the church of Smyrna was about 40 miles northeast of Ephesus.

The Ephesian church we studied just a little while ago, that it was the apostle John that ordained Polycarp, the first century Christian historian who was the first bishop of this church. And Polycarp tradition says at least died a martyr in that area. Great tribulation, great persecution.

The Christians of that church were fed to wild beasts. And the wild beast didn't intimidate them. Then they were burned.

They were tortured. There was incredible hardship came upon this church. I was with my wife several years ago.

We were in Rome and we went to the Colosseum in Rome where Christians were tortured and ripped to pieces. They were burnt. They were displayed and fought against and ripped apart and made a mockery of by the people.

And I remember standing in the middle of this gigantic Colosseum in Rome, feeling so unworthy to be called even by the name of Christ, that I had not walked in the footsteps. I was walking on cement that I know is drenched in the blood of the saints. And I was feeling so unworthy that day to even walk in that same place where they walked.

A church that had gone through such struggle and trial. And I had read stories of how they tied people to stakes and set them aflame. And they would go out singing the Psalms.

They would be worshiping God as the flames consumed their flesh. An absolute glory that was so upon these early Christians that people who were unsaved, who were in the stands, who had come to see their death, would stand up and say their God is God. If their God can take them through into eternity that way, I want this Savior.

People stood and confessed Christ, even knowing that they were the next to go to the stake or to be torn apart. There was such a glory in that church. And there's a glory that can come upon, that does come upon a life.

If our heart is right, if we have the right perspective in the heart and life of those who are going through struggles and trials, if we can understand that in the midst of all of the difficulties we face, that Christ is with us. He has never left us. He has never forsaken us.

He's walking every step of the way. And there's a cup of glory. There's a cup of his presence available to those who go through suffering and difficulty.

There were people who would say that there's no suffering really. There are no prisons in this present system, especially in the Western world. But that's not true.

Imprisonment is basically, the concept of imprisonment is when a society takes a certain segment of its population and shuns them, puts them away into a corner, puts them away into another place. That's really the concept of imprisonment. Imprisonment is isolation.

Putting somebody away into a place where they're sort of out of sight and out of mind. And I know that, and I've seen over the years as a pastor, people put into very real prisons. Although there are no bars on these prisons, they're very real.

And if you are here tonight and you're in one of these, you know what I'm talking about. You can't see the bars, but it's a very real place. It's a place of being isolated.

It's a place of being rejected. It's a place sometimes of being written off by those that are closest to you, close to your heart. It's a place where you can feel all alone.

You feel forsaken. Sometimes even erroneously feel forsaken by God. There are prisons of rejection.

Rejection by friends. Jesus said in Matthew 10, 25, it's enough for the disciple that he be as his master and the servant as his Lord. If they called the house, the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? There are people who have come to Christ in this room tonight, in this sanctuary that you had lots of friends and you were perhaps somewhat at least popular in the places you traveled, the people you walked among.

Then all of a sudden you've received Christ and it's the best news you've ever heard in your whole life. The darkness in your mind is dissipating. The light has come into your soul.

You're beginning to walk and you know who you are. You know where you came from. You know where you're going.

And for a season you are so excited and you want to tell all your friends. And then all of a sudden you find that these same friends that once you were able to associate with and relate to, all of a sudden are rejecting you and wanting to put you off in a corner, wanting to shove you out of their company. You see a world that's sown in darkness will never accept or rejoice in the light.

Light has no fellowship with darkness. And sometimes, especially if you're a young Christian, it's so hard to understand how it is that you found such good news and those that you love, because it's not wrong to love your friends, you know, but those that you love are pushing you out of their company. And you find yourself isolated and you find yourself alone.

And it's sort of like they've imprisoned you. They've shut you out of their presence and you feel so alone and so rejected. It's even more difficult when that rejection comes from members of your own family.

Jesus said in Matthew chapter 10, He said, don't think that I've come to send peace on the earth. I come not to send peace, but a sword. For I've come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. I suppose that's the imprisonment that this society offers that is, for a Christian, can hurt worse than any other prison. And some of you here tonight, you

know what that's all about.

You came to Christ. You heard the gospel on a radio show or somebody came to you and told you or you picked up a tract or you came to church. You found Jesus.

It was the best news that you'd ever heard in your whole life. And you went home to your husband. You went home to your wife or you went home to your children or you went home, young people, to your mom and dad.

And you tried to share this news. And in the beginning, perhaps there was a semi-tolerance to your newfound faith. But the more you walk with God, the more you love God, you find an intolerance beginning to develop in those around you.

And in some cases, it turned to a rage. And there are women here tonight that it cost you your husband to walk with God. There are men that it cost you your wife.

There are children that cost you your relationship with your mom and dad. Deep, deep wounds and bruises in your lives. And it feels like you're in a prison.

You go home. The home is supposed to be a place of refuge. And then you walk in the door, but it feels like a prison with jailers all around, casting you out of their presence and treating you in a difficult manner.

There are prisons also of persecution. Paul says in 2 Timothy 3, verse 12, Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. All, A-L-L, that will live godly in Christ Jesus.

You can be at your workplace, all of a sudden, evil spoken of for no apparent reason. You used to work with everybody. You knew them.

You loved them. They seemed to have a respect for you. And all of a sudden now, because you're doing things right, because you're not falsifying documents, because all of a sudden you come in, God's Spirit got a hold of you, you're working hard.

That means every sluggard is now going to have an envy towards you. You're doing things right. That means everybody that's doing it wrong is going to stand against you.

And you may have been well spoken of when you were one of the boys or girls, quote unquote. But all of a sudden now, there's an evil speaking. And some of you here know what I'm talking about tonight.

You go to work and you're evil spoken of. It doesn't matter, it seems, how hard you work. You can't ever work hard enough.

It doesn't matter how much you put in. It seems when monthly assessment time comes out, there's always something wrong with the things that you're doing at work. And all it is, is that because you confess Christ, and you profess to love Him, and know Him, and walk with Him.

You are passed by consistently when times for promotion and betterment come up in the workplace. I want to warn you, don't let bitterness ever get in your heart over these things. God will defend you.

He's the defender of His own children. You'll find that there's a buddy system in the workplace, and you don't play the game, and you don't get promoted. That's just the bottom line of the whole way that the

world operates.

But I tell you that they may pass you by here, but there's an ultimate pass by that's coming to them if they don't repent of their sin and turn to God. They may pass you by, but I'll tell you, there's somebody a lot more important than those over here that is not going to pass you by. Hallelujah.

Very soon, the trumpet is going to sound. And you might be sitting at your desk. Maybe they're speaking evil of you.

Maybe you've been passed by for all kinds of promotions. But I want to tell you that trumpet's going to sound, and all that's going to be left is your pencil on that desk. Hallelujah.

Glory to God. There's prisons of loneliness. I've met so many lonely people.

Isolated from work and isolated at family. Loneliness. Over the years as a pastor, I've met situations that have broken my heart.

Wives, lonely in their marriage. Having had a husband that they felt close to, and all of a sudden they come home, they found Jesus. And they find a separation now coming in their marriage.

Not that they want it. They desire their husband. They want to be close, but there's a separation because Christ is now on the throne of the heart.

Those are difficult situations, and it can seem like you're in a prison. It really can. You know, everybody around you is free, but all of a sudden it just seems like, oh God, I want to love you.

I want to serve you. But it just seems that ever-increasing disaster is coming upon my life. I heard a story of a woman recently that accepted the Lord in a suburban middle-class family.

She received Christ as her Savior. Went home all excited. And for a season, her husband endured this.

And then one day he came home, and he said to her, we're just growing apart. The things don't seem to be going good at home anymore. If you'll just tone down this religion of yours, if you'll tone it down, everything's going to be all right.

But if you can't tone it down, I'm afraid I'm going to have to leave you. And she had a very real and difficult choice to make, but she chose the Lord. And I'm so, I'm happy for her, although it's hard, and my heart hurts for her.

And so her husband left her for another woman and her two sons, not understanding the situation. They also decided they wanted to go and live with their father. And so here she is, less than a short time after receiving Christ, and she's lost everything.

She's lost her husband. She's lost her sons. Everything that was precious to her on this earth is gone.

And folks, don't you ever underestimate the pain that is in somebody's heart when they have to make that kind of a choice. If you've never had to make that choice, you better thank God that you've never had to make that choice. But there are people all over the church who've had to make that choice, and they feel that, God, I've chosen to live for You, and now it seems like I'm in a prison.

It seems like I'm shut in on all sides. I'm isolated. I'm lonely.

I'm hurt. And you can identify with how the church of Smyrna felt. Receiving Christ, being betrayed by family members, brother betraying brother unto the death, being arrested by soldiers, being thrust into a place of isolation, and all it seemed is that there's just wild beasts and fire out there.

And there can come a moment of absolute despair upon the heart of a person who has given all for God, and all of a sudden you find yourself in a place of trial, in a place of testing, in a place of loneliness, a place of persecution, and a place of imprisonment. But in the midst of it all, the writer of Hebrews chapter 13 verse 5 pens these words, and they're words that you need to write down on the table of your heart and never put it away. I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.

You're not alone. No matter what your situation is, no matter how hard it is, no matter how much of a sacrifice you've had to make, there is coming a day, my brother and sister, we sing about it, it will be worth it all when we see Jesus. Life's trial will seem so small when we see Christ.

One glimpse of His dear face, all sorrow will erase. So bravely run the race until we see Christ. One of the tactics of the powers of darkness when you're in this place is to say that God has forgotten you.

God has abandoned you. You're all alone. Everybody at church is getting blessed.

Everybody is experiencing the glory of God. Everybody around you is knowing victory. But here you are, lonely, abandoned, imprisoned, and forsaken.

There's some of you here tonight, you've come to this service and you're on your last legs. I've sensed that in my spirit the whole time sitting on the platform tonight. You're on your last legs.

You say, God, if I don't hear from You soon, I don't know what I'm going to do. I can't go on. I know there are people like that tonight, because God's Holy Spirit is speaking that to my heart.

And the Word of the Lord to you tonight is, I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. I'll never.

Turn to the book of Isaiah, please. Chapter 49. Isaiah chapter 49.

Now this Word is for you. Everyone in this house that have feel that you're in that place of imprisonment, a place of difficulty. God doesn't promise you at any time that He's going to take you out of it.

But He promises you that He's going to give you the victory in the midst of it. He's going to take you through the fire. It's not going to burn you.

And He's going to take you through the water. And it's not going to drown you. That's the promise of God.

You can have victory in the midst of your trial. The church of Smyrna went out a glorious church. One of the only two churches that Jesus had nothing negative to say about.

In the midst of your trial, there's a purification process that's going on in your life that is precious in the sight of God. You're not looking to riches. You're not walking in false peace and false comfort.

Your situation has forced you into a place where what you have with God is real, or you don't have it at all. It has to be real because it can't get you through otherwise. It has to be real.

In chapter 49 of Isaiah, verse 13, the Lord says, Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth, and break forth into singing, O mountains. For the Lord has comforted His people and will have mercy upon His afflicted.

But Zion said, Now that's some of the children of God.

The Lord has forsaken me and the Lord has forgotten me. There are some here tonight that you feel that of God. That God, because of your situation, you say, God, how is it you said that you came to give me an abundant life? And Lord God, it feels like you've forsaken me.

But you see, God's going to reveal something to you tonight. The abundance you seek is not in your situation. The abundance you seek is in Him.

It's in Him and Him alone. Your situation may never change, but your life will change. And your outlook can change when you begin to understand that you have, in the midst of your poverty, in the midst of your trial, in the midst of your difficulty, if you have Him, that's what He says to the church of Smyrna, you are rich in the midst of your difficulty, in the midst of your poverty.

I knew a lady one time, her husband treated her like absolute dirt. It was excruciating just to watch him. It was all I could do sometimes, not to literally take matters into my own hands.

He would just berate her in public and treat her cruelly. And she'd have no money. And it was a terrible situation.

But that lady, in the midst of that difficult situation that she was in, had a treasure that I yearned for. She would be at prayer meetings, and she'd be weeping before a holy God. She'd be praying for sons and daughters.

She'd be praying for people out on the streets. She'd pray for her husband day in and day out. The more cruelly he treated her, the more she lifted him up, the more she would speak well of him in front of other people.

That woman had a treasure in her life. She had a treasure in her heart. Even though her situation was difficult, God in His grace, that man developed a very, very severe illness that made him an invalid.

And it went when she could have said, now, you're getting your just reward for what you've done to me and how you've treated me all these years. No. She became a nursemaid to that man and kept him at home, and bathed him, and helped him to walk and look after him, and still does so today, and won his soul to God.

In the abundance of her poverty, she was rich, for she had the very presence of God in her life. When I would meet with her, she wouldn't want to talk about the weather. She didn't want to talk about the cows out in the pasture.

She wanted to talk about Jesus. She would always talk about the goodness of God and how God was blessing her. Oh, I tell you, brothers and sisters, it was all I could do to look in that home and find an ounce of blessing in that place.

But God was blessing her. Her blessing was not in her circumstance. There was an interior blessing because of her poverty and deep trial that she was in.

She had turned to Him and found Him. Hallelujah! Glory to God! Glory to God! And now in this hour, she is one of the mothers of Zion. She's one of the pillars in the church.

Hallelujah! Never ever having any place of prominence or preeminence in the church. All she ever did for years was just serve and bring a cup of water if she noticed that the preacher was struggling with his throat. Just little things in the church.

God had done something rich in her heart. In the midst of her trial, she had found a treasure that many who have never known difficulty ever find. Oh, I just praise the Lord for His faithfulness in what He did in her life.

But Zion said, verse 14, Isaiah 49, The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, but yet I will not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee on the palms of my hands.

And now listen to the other part. Thy walls are continually before me. Thy walls.

What walls, you say? Lord God, You said, You've engraved me on the palms of Your hands. I understand that. I understand that You went to Calvary.

I understand that nails went through Your wrist. And my name was on the very tip of one of those nails. And my name is engraved on Your hand.

God, You won't forget me. I acknowledge that tonight. You'll never forget me.

But what are these walls? And what the Lord is saying, I have encircled You. Haven't You seen Me there? I am protecting You. I have built walls around You.

The enemy will not exact against You. Nothing can come against You, but that You're able to bear. The Lord will not allow you to be tempted above that you can bear, but with the trial, a temptation will make a way to escape that you may be able to bear it.

You're not alone. You're not alone. God is with you in the midst of your struggle.

God has built a wall. He has encircled you. Look at Psalm 91.

Go back to Psalm 91. I want to show you this, how He's encircled you. Psalm 91, He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide, or lodge, under the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in Him will I trust. Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler and from the noisome pestilence. Now here's the walls.

He shall cover thee with His feathers and under His wings shalt thou trust. His truth shall be thy shield and thy buckler. In other words, thy protection.

He will cover you with His feathers. Sir, madam, brother, sister, young person that's here, you've been in difficulty and trial, but you've never been alone. God has been with you and God will stay with you.

He has built walls around you. Those walls are His own arms, His own hands. He's not going to allow the enemy to exact against you.

He's not going to allow the powers of hell to destroy you. But in the midst of that difficulty, He's going to reveal to you Himself. That's what He was saying to Smyrna.

You're going to have a revelation of Jesus in the midst of that trial. And that revelation is going to produce the sweetness that others who've never known trial are never going to have. If you can understand it tonight, if you're in a place of difficulty, you're blessed of Almighty God.

In that place of difficulty, if you will turn to Him, you will find Him in a way that so few find Him on this side of eternity. Hallelujah. Thou shalt not be afraid, verse 5, for the terror by night nor for the arrow that flies by day.

Some of you, you've known what it is to be terrified in the night time. And you've known what it is to get out of your bed. And the moment you're out, out come the arrows and they're flying at you from every corner direction of your own house, even sometimes.

But He says, You'll not be afraid of the terror by night nor for the arrow that flyeth by day, nor for the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor for the destruction that wastes at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes thou shalt behold and see the reward of the wicked, because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most high, thy habitation.

There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For He will give His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder. The young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet, because He has set His love upon me, therefore will I deliver Him. I will set Him on high, because He has known my name.

He shall call upon me, and I will answer Him. I will be with Him in trouble. I will deliver Him and honor Him.

With long life will I satisfy Him and show Him my salvation. That's what the Lord is saying to you tonight. I will show you my salvation.

I will give you a revelation. I will give you an understanding heart. That one day, something is coming your way, and you will be comforted.

You will be encouraged with this revelation. That's what the presence of Jesus was to this church called Smyrna. Hallelujah.

One day, your warfare will be accomplished. He said to Smyrna, be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life. Be faithful unto death.

Let me just read to you from Isaiah 40, please. Hallelujah. Isaiah 40, verse 1. Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, for she has received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. Now, verse 28, please go ahead. Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary.

There is no searching of His understanding. He gives power to the faint. And to them that have no might, He increases their strength.

Even the youth shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles.

They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint. Look at Romans, please.

I want to show you the revelation now. The revelation that Jesus gave to this church. The revelation.

Verse 8. Verse 15, For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. In other words, you're not alone. You're not alone in your house.

You're not alone at your job. You're not alone on the street. Wherever you are, you're not alone.

We have not received the spirit of fear, but we have been adopted by Almighty God, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. I'm never alone. I'm not alone.

Even in the darkest night. Even when things are the most difficult. I'm never alone.

He has said, I will never leave you. And I will never forsake you. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

And if we're children, then heirs. Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.

Listen to what Paul says in verse 18. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy, are not worthy, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. Hallelujah.

The sufferings are not worthy. Jesus, in the book of Hebrews chapter 2, the Scripture says, Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. In the next couple of verses it says, Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and faint in your minds.

Consider Him who for the joy. Paul says, I reckon the sufferings of this present time are not worthy. Are not worthy.

No matter how hard it gets, brothers and sisters. No matter what happens to our society. No matter where we end up on this earth as a church body.

The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to even compare with the glory that's going to be revealed in you and I as the body of Jesus Christ. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

The Bible exhorts us to have the eyes of Christ. His eyes were not on His situation, but He was looking ahead to the joy that was before Him. That's where you and I need to be looking this night.

If you're in a situation of difficulty, ask God for the grace to get your eyes off of your situation in so much as is possible in the Holy Ghost. And begin to look unto Him, the author and finisher of your salvation. Look unto Him who said, I will never fail you.

A thousand will fall at your one hand ten thousand at the other hand, but it will not come nigh you. Hallelujah. Now listen to what glory lies ahead.

2 Corinthians, please. 2 Corinthians. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 15. What glory.

What glory lies ahead. For all things are for your sakes that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not.

But though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. Listen to verse 17. Just the first four words.

For our light affliction. Now if you go back over the life of the Apostle Paul and you read his testimony, I was shipwrecked. I was a day and night in the deep or three days and three nights.

I was, I was stoned. I was left for dead. I was in perils among false brethren.

I was slandered, blasphemed, you name it. Whatever could happen to Paul, it happened to Paul. Imagine going to preach a sermon and being left for dead under a pile of rocks.

And the church comes around and prays for you. You get up, you go back into the city and preach again. And Paul says, our light affliction, light affliction, which is but for a moment.

His eyes were not looking on his circumstances. I'm sure of that. Works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Now here's the key. Verse 18. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. Hallelujah. Now, we would ask, what did Paul see ahead? Paul saw in Romans 6, 5. Let me just read it to you.

He said, if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection. The Apostle John, the beloved Apostle, in 1 John chapter 3 and verse 2, he said, Now, beloved, we are now the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him.

For we shall see him as he is. When he shall appear, we shall be like him. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us as the Church of Jesus Christ. Revelation.

Let's look at what he really looks like. Revelation chapter 1. John says, When he shall appear, we shall be like him. We shall be like him.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Revelation 1, 13.

John says, And in the midst of the seven candlesticks was one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt above the paps with a golden girdle. His head and hairs were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire, and his feet like undefined brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars, and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and his countenance, or appearance, was as the sun shining in his strength.

Hallelujah. We know that John says, When I saw him, I fell at his feet like a dead man. Paul says, The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.

Hallelujah. Revelation 1 talks about what Jesus looks like. John says, We are now the sons of God, and we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him.

Paul says, In Philippians 3.21, He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself. The book of 1 Corinthians. Turn there, please, quickly.

Chapter 15. Hallelujah. Are you starting to get the picture? Verse 49.

As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery.

We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, this mortal must put on immortality.

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding. We sang that tonight. Jesus is my Savior.

I shall not be moved. Hallelujah. Always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

I show you a mystery. I show you a mystery. The revelation of Jesus Christ Let me just read some verses of scripture to you now.

John says, I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea. And I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride, adorned for her husband, even those who are suffering, even those who are in difficulty tonight. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. There shall be no more death, no more sorrow, no more crying. There shall be no more pain for the former things, hallelujah, thanks to God, are passed away.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. And he said to me, Write, for these words are true and faithful.

These words are true and faithful. And I saw no temple therein for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. The city had no need of the sun nor of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it, and kings of the earth to bring their glory and honor into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day. There shall be no night there.

They shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles, neither works abomination or makes a lie, but they that are written in the Lamb's book of life. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. And he showed me a pure river of water of light, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and out of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it and on either side of the river there was the tree of life, which bared twelve manner of fruits and yielded her fruit every month.

And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servant shall serve Him. They shall see His face and His name shall be in their foreheads.

There shall be no night there. They need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.

And he said unto me, These things are faithful and true. And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angels to show unto His servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly.

Blessed is he that keeps the sayings of the prophecy of this book. Hallelujah. The Apostle Paul calls this life a momentary and a light affliction.

The devil would have us to believe that it's all over. You're rejected and God's forsaken you and you're never going to get through. But you know that the devil is a liar.

And we're not ignorant of his schemes. We're not ignorant of his lies. He wants to drive you into a dungeon of despair.

He's a master at doing that. He wants to crush you and he wants to convince you that God doesn't love you and God hasn't forsaken you. God has forsaken you.

God has nothing in the future for you. But he's just a liar. An absolute liar.

And the father of all lies. God has not forsaken you. And if you will turn to Him and look to Him with all of your heart, there is a richness of Jesus that can be found in trial that can't be found anywhere else.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. I know your tribulation.

I know your poverty. I know your works. But you are rich.

Hallelujah. You are rich in the midst of it all. Whenever we have prayer meetings in this house on Thursday and Friday night, I know, especially the women who come down to pray, I know the ones who've had a hard, hard home life.

There's a richness in your prayer. Oh, mothers of Zion, don't you ever stop praying in this house. There's something in your prayer that touches the heart of God.

When a person has gone through difficulty in trial in their life, something happens inside. And they come up and all they want is Him. And all they have is Him.

And their whole focus is Him. Their whole heart is for Him. Their whole love is for Him.

And they've begun to look out for themselves. And they look out unto others. And they begin to get concerned about the struggles because they can identify with the struggles.

Jesus Himself was moved with the feeling of our infirmities. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

One last scripture, please. Go to the book of Romans, chapter 8. Romans, chapter 8. Some of you tonight have a lot of people against you. And it seems the circumstances at times are against you.

But I have a scripture that blows a hole right through the middle of all that. Romans 8, 31. It says, What shall we then say to these things? If God is before us, who can be against us? Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. I'm not trying to sound callous tonight or flippant. But I tell you, you can go back home to that situation tonight and go in your room.

And nothing has changed at home. You can get down on your knees and have a little chuckle with God. And I really mean that.

You can worship and laugh and rejoice. God, if you be for me, who can be against me? Who? He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Ma'am, you go home and that husband's heart may be hard. But I want to tell you, there's not a man on the earth big enough to fight against God.

There's not a man on the earth small enough to hide from God. I challenge you to get to your knees and say, God, who does that man think he is? That he can stand against you and stand against your convicting power and stand against your love and begin to pray like you've never prayed before. If God has to put that man on a bed of affliction, like my precious sister that I spoke to you about, then God will do what God has to do.

You love him with all of your heart. You praise him. And you make a decision in your heart tonight.

Lord, I'm going to love you like Daniel and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. God is well able to deliver us out of the flame. And if he wants to, he can.

But if not, we'll serve him anyway. It makes no difference. Hallelujah.

God can take me through the fire. God can take me through this trial. And I'm not looking to find satisfaction in this place.

I'm looking beyond. I see a joy coming ahead of me. I don't fully understand it all.

But I'm going to a place where there's no more sorrow. I'm going to a place where no more arrows come flying in my direction. I'm going to a place where there's no more backbiting, and no more lying, and no more backstabbing.

I'm going to a place where dogs don't come in. I'm going to a place where righteousness dwells. I'm going to a place where I can step out of my mansion, walk down streets of gold, and come into the parlor of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. I'm going to a place where I can walk down the street that has trees on every side of the river, and there's fruit for the healing of the nations, and I can take whatever I want for whatever need I have.

Hallelujah. Glory to God. Glory to God.

So Lord, we declare tonight that this momentary and light affliction is not worthy to be compared. It's not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. Hallelujah.

Verse 33 says, Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who shall lay anything to the charge? If you're walking in a right relationship with God, I know there are women and men here tonight that you go home, and an unsaved partner is picking you apart continuously, and talking about your hypocrisy. You're not perfect.

And the only one perfect is Christ. And you make mistakes. You lose your temper.

You do things you shouldn't do. And they're right there to point out every fault. And crush you.

And tear you down. And there are women here and men who can identify with this tonight. But the scripture says, Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Who shall bring an accusation against the children of God? It is God that justifies.

If you are justified in the sight of God, don't you dare let any voice condemn you and cast you down. If you know you're a child of God. Hallelujah.

Who is He that condemns? It is Christ that died again, rather is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, that means trial, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long. We are counted as sheep for the slaughter.

Now, the Apostle Paul says, Nay, but in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Nothing. Nothing.

Nothing.

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