

(Timeless Doctrines) What Kind of a Church Do You Go To? - Part 5

by Denny Kenaston

Denny Kenaston's sermon examines the messages to the seven churches in Revelation to evaluate the characteristics and faithfulness of today's church.

Duration: 1:11:35

Scripture: Ephesians 1:1, Revelation 1:1-3, Revelation 1:13-17, Revelation 22:16-19

Topics: "Doctrine"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the urgency and importance of understanding the book of Revelation. He emphasizes that although it may bring fear and uncertainty, it can also be a great blessing if we open our hearts to it. The preacher then focuses on the description of Christ in Revelation chapter 1, highlighting his credentials and the significance of each aspect of his appearance. He explains that Christ uses different parts of his description to address the specific needs of each of the seven churches mentioned in the book.

Transcript

Hello, this is Brother Denny. Welcome to Charity Ministries. Our desire is that your life would be blessed and changed by this message.

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These messages are offered to all without charge by the free will offerings of God's people. A special thank you to all who support this ministry. This morning, the Lord has laid on my heart a message which I'm sure it will take me two weeks to give.

I wrestled some with the title and I may change the title, but for now, we'll give the messages this title. What kind of church do you go to? What kind of church do you go to? Maybe another title would be, The Seven Churches. Another title might be, A Message from God to the Church.

You know, as I travel, I often ask that question. Once you meet someone new and you begin to have a conversation with them and they say that they are a Christian, I often ask them, What kind of church do you go to? Now, they know what I mean when I ask that, and so they say, Well, I go to a Baptist church or I go to a Mennonite church, I go to a Methodist church, and they give a certain title. But as I meditated upon the message this morning, I thought to myself, the messages to the seven churches would be a good evaluation for us, a good definition for us to describe what kind of church we go to.

I believe that we can find the answer to that question in Revelation chapter 2 and 3. The messages that we find in Revelation 2 and 3, I'm sure you would agree, we could have seven sermons and then even not get done. I don't believe that I'll have seven sermons, but I don't believe that I can get done in one. So, if you haven't already turned there, I'd like you to turn to the book of Revelation and we want to read a few verses by introduction in chapter 1. I believe the message is very important for us in these last days.

Revelation is a book that was written in the context of the last days. And now we live in the context of the last of the last days. So, if it was important and pertinent 2,000 years ago, and it was very much so, and we all see that, it is so much the more important and pertinent for us who live in the last of the last days.

John, in chapter 1 and verse 1, says, The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto Him to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass. And He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John, who bare record of the word of God and of the testimony of Jesus Christ and of all things that he saw. Verse 3 is important to us.

Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand. Now, I think that I want to take that literally, what it says, and know that we're going to get a blessing even this morning because of what we are reading. We'll get even a greater blessing if we open up the ears of our heart and hear the things that we hear this morning.

And we'll get even a greater blessing if we allow those things which we hear with the ears of our heart to affect us and change us and cause response in us. We will get a triple blessing according to the word of God here. Why? For the time is at hand.

And I believe that those words were breathed out by the Spirit of God to quicken even in our hearts this morning an urgency, an expectancy, a watchfulness, a wakefulness, and yea, maybe for some to even wake us up. For the time is at hand. And verse 4, John says, John, to the seven churches which are in Asia, grace be unto you and peace from him which is, and which was, and which is to come, and from the seven spirits which are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness and the first begotten of the dead.

Now, I read verse 4 so that we could see that just like all of the other, or many of the New Testament books, this one has an introduction to it. John puts his name on it. He's sending it to churches, wanting them to receive it.

Now, let's turn also as introduction to chapter 22. I'm going to go all the way to the end of the book now and read from verse 16. Revelation 22 and verse 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. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come.

And let him that is athirst, Come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book.

If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. Aren't those awesome words? And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life and out of the holy city and from the things which are written in this book. He which testifieth these things say, Surely I come quickly.

Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Amen. Now, we read the beginning and we read the end. And the reason why I did that is because I think it's very important for us, as we understand anything in the middle, to also look at it as a whole.

And the whole of the book of Revelation was written to these seven churches. Christ gave them an evaluation and admonished them each before He unveiled the prophecy of this book. I believe those things are important.

And they can help us to understand the weight of the words that fell on the hearts of those seven churches. Because all the things that followed from chapter 4 all the way to chapter 22, they were given in light of the admonitions, the evaluations, the corrections, the inspirations that Christ gave to those seven churches. The prophecy of the whole book is clearly meant to motivate them, to open their hearts to the evaluation that Christ gave, to encourage their hearts, to repent, and to inspire their hearts to be among the number of those who have been overcomers.

In chapter 1, reading from verse 13, Christ gives His credentials. And in the midst of the seven candlesticks, one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girded about the paps with a golden girdle, His head, and this is a description of Christ, His head and His hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes were as a flame of fire, and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars, and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was as the sun shineth in His strength.

And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead, and He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not, I am the first and the last. And I think we'll stop right there. Christ gives His credentials before He begins to give or unfold the message to the seven churches.

Imagine with me this morning, just imagine, it's a Sunday morning service after this message was given to the pastor of each of these churches, because I do believe that it happened just that way. There was a church called Ephesus, and a church called Smyrna, and a church called Thyatira, and all the other of the seven churches. There were churches.

They received this message from God through the Apostle John. It was a letter sent to them. The pastor gets up on Sunday morning.

The congregation is all gathered together, and he says, We have a letter from our beloved Apostle John. Can you imagine the excitement in the air that morning when the pastor gets up with a letter, probably a scroll, from John the Apostle? Oh, how interested each and every person would be as they sit on the edge of their seat and wonder what he's going to say. A letter from John.

The attention rises as he begins to read chapter one, verse one, two, and three. And immediately, their attention is gripped, because they find out this is a very special message, and there's a special blessing on those who hear it. And so, this begins to create interest in their heart, even as they begin to hear it read.

They find out it's a special message to them. It's to the seven churches. And they hear their name in the very beginning of it.

And you must use your imagination a little this morning, because there was a time and there was a church who heard this message for the first time. And when they heard it the first time, they just heard their name. Oh, the church at Ephesus.

That's us! That's us! Yes, that's you. Can't you see the awe settle down over their hearts as they hear for the first time the description? Because you see, John is writing to them, and he's telling them, I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I saw the Lord Jesus. He was there.

He was on the Isle of Patmos, and I saw Him. But He was nothing like anything that I've ever seen before. He was like the Ancient of Days.

He had white hair, and His eyes were like a flame of fire. I saw Him there on the Isle of Patmos. His feet were like brass.

His feet were on fire like they'd been in a furnace. It was an awesome sight. And John is writing this to the church.

Can't you see the awesomeness of that? Settle down over the church as they get a glimpse of what John tells them that he saw. Personal references made to each church. They hear those words.

And under the angel of the church at Ephesus, and that word angel is the pastor, by the way. Under the angel of the church at Ephesus, to the pastor, write in everybody's ears, Perka, a special word for us. He used our name, the church at Ephesus, or the church at Smyrna.

He used our name. Hearts are bowed in that service there that Sunday morning as He blesses them and He encourages them. And then after He has encouraged them, He rebukes them.

And hearts are bowed in the service as they realize, yes, we have lost our first love. We have lost our first love. Then the scenes in heaven begin to unfold before them.

Chapter 4, chapter 5, a multitude of people, four and twenty elders. These things begin to unfold before them. And John is telling them, I saw these things.

I was caught up into heaven. The seals are described in chapter 6. Trumpet judgments. Vials.

God's wrath. Judgment. Some things they understand.

Some of it they don't understand at all. But it's a message from God through the Apostle John. We've never heard it before.

We've never read it before. And we're sitting here on a Sunday morning and the pastor begins to read chapter 4, chapter 5, chapter 6. And awe settles down over us. We wonder what it means.

Some of it we understand. Some of it we don't understand. But an awe settles down over us because we know that it's a message from God through the Apostle John.

We see the whore riding on a beast. We hear the angels crying. Babylon is fallen, is fallen.

That great city is fallen. We hear of great war. Much trouble.

Much tribulation. We hear of death. We hear of plagues.

We hear of sun scorching the people upon the earth. We see the bride who's made herself ready. We read of the new heaven and the new earth and the things to come.

And the pastor finishes by saying, these things I sent an angel to signify them that they might be delivered to all of the churches because the time is at hand. And the last words that ring in our spirit that morning are the words of our Lord Jesus who says, I'm coming quickly. I'm coming quickly.

To Him that overcometh will I grant. Etcetera, etcetera. What kind of a service do you think they had that morning? After the reading of the letter that the Apostle John sent to them.

What kind of a service do you think they had when the letter was finished? If the last book of the Bible was of utmost importance to them, and it certainly was, how much more is it to us who live in the last of the last days? How much more is it important to us? Oh, we may read it. And I know there's some of it that way. We may read it.

Some of you young people, you may have read it and thought, I don't understand much in that book. Well, listen, the church at Ephesus didn't either. When it was read to them, they didn't understand it all.

But yet, there's enough of it that anybody with the simplest education can read, that you can pick up the spirit of what God was saying in that book. And the spirit of what God was saying in that book is the same spirit that needs to settle down over each and every child of God and every church that is in the world today. That needs to settle down, whether we can figure it all out or not.

Whether you know what the trumpets are, or whether you know what the vials are, whether you know what Babylon is, whether you can name who the Antichrist is. The spirit of that whole book needs to settle down over each and every one of our hearts and minds. And I believe that even though that church at Ephesus, there was a lot of it that they could not understand, there's enough of it that they could understand that an awesomeness settled over their hearts as that thing was being read to them, one chapter after another.

Now, there are many ways that we can look at these seven churches. But I would like for us to consider just a few thoughts here, notice a few things, before we begin to look at these seven churches. I would like you to take note, number one, that the word overcometh is used seven times.

At the end of each admonition that the Lord Jesus gives to each church, He finishes it with a motivational word. He that overcometh. And then He gives a word of blessing, which we will look at those as we're going through these two chapters.

But I want us to notice the word overcome means a conqueror. He who conquers. I'd like us also to notice that this word overcome is an imperative word.

It's not an optional word. I have heard some teach, you know, two levels of Christianity. There are the overcomers, and there's the rest of the guys.

And the overcomers are those who live on a higher plane spiritually than what the rest do. And there are whole little books written about that. But I want to tell you, if you study the context of these two chapters in their simplicity, God is not speaking of a special blessing to a special few who are more earnest than the rest and who overcome.

The overcome that we will see in these two chapters, it's imperative overcome. And it's to each and every one of us. The challenge goes to us this morning.

We must be, not may be, not can be, we must be overcomers. As we see the last day approaching, we must be overcomers. It is imperative.

I'd like us to notice that that challenge to overcome was given in the context of all the rest of the book of Revelation. You see, many times we contextualize portions of Scripture. And this is one that I think we've probably done that a lot because oh, the message to the seven churches, they make good revival messages.

You know, you can go in and you can zero in on one of them and apply them very well, but I think it's good for us to realize that chapter 2 and 3 are packed right there in the middle between 1 and 4 and all the way down to 22. And Christ was preaching and admonishing these seven churches in light of the revelation of Jesus Christ to follow in chapter 4 all the way to the end of the chapter. And oh, may it be also a motivation to us.

Because you see, there's an urgency, an urgent spirit that you find in the book of Revelation that can be a great blessing to our hearts and our lives if we will open our heart to it. Even though it can strike some fear in you. Even though it can put some uncertainty in you.

Even though it might even give some of your children nightmares at night. I can remember the children when they were growing up, and even the little ones now. You know, we play the Bible to them while they sleep at night when they go to bed and sometimes they'll say, Papa, is that Revelation? I don't want to listen to Revelation tonight.

You know, they know. They don't understand it all, but they know there's something awesome about that book. It's scary.

Well, it is scary. But blessed are those who read and hear and do and keep the prophecy that is written in that book. Blessed are you if you allow your heart to get scared.

Blessed are you. Alright, the next one that we want to notice. Another little phrase that comes seven times in these two chapters is the phrase, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

And the reason why Christ put that word in there is because there are those who will not hear. So, we have to recognize this morning that the choice is there for each and every one of us. Some will hear and some will not hear.

But the challenge is given after the awesome Word is given, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. If you've got an open heart this morning, then you hear what the Spirit of God is saying to the church. And that is given seven times each to each of these seven churches.

It's like a wake-up call. It's a word of wake-up. Another thing we want to notice, and this also appears seven times, Christ said these words seven times, I know thy works.

I know thy works. And today, His all-seeing eye knows our works. And we, we sit here this morning as a church, and isn't it a blessing, isn't it an awesome blessing to sit here and ponder and know that the Lord Jesus knows our works.

He has evaluated us, Charity Christian Fellowship, with just as much clarity, with just as much distinctness, with the same all-seeing eyes, which are like a flame of fire. He has brought His discernment upon us. He knows where we're at, just like those seven churches.

And I'd like us to notice also the fourth thing and the last thing. Christ describes Himself out of the description of Revelation 1. He uses, out of that description, little parts of the description to each of those seven churches. And in each situation, He uses a part of His description that applies to the needs of that particular church.

Amazing! But that's the way God is, you know. Remember, He's like that diamond in many sides, and one side of the diamond may apply to you, and another side applies to me. I may need to see the lily of the valley today, and you may need to see the lion of the tribe of Judah.

But Jesus uses little pieces of the whole description there in Revelation 1 and applies it to each church right where they're at. Alright, now we're going to give names to these seven churches. Descriptive names to them this morning just so it will be easy for you to follow.

And maybe you have a better name for one of these churches. I would be glad for a little input on it. But let's just look at these.

The church at Ephesus, we're going to call that the active Orthodox church. The church at Smyrna, we'll call it the blameless persecuted church. Pergamos, we'll call it the acceptable worldly church.

Thyatira, we will call that a corrupt church. Sardis, we're going to call that a dead church. Philadelphia, we will call the church at Philadelphia the faithful church.

And the church at Laodicea, the lukewarm church. Those seven. The active Orthodox church, the blameless persecuted church, the acceptable worldly church, the corrupt church, the dead church, the faithful church, and the lukewarm church.

Those seven categories we're going to follow. Now let me say this before we get into these seven churches. There are several ways that we could apply and there are several ways that these two chapters have been applied down through church history.

First of all, these were seven actual churches in John's day. I think that you all believe that. I think you know that those churches did sit down and hear this letter for the first time.

What an awesome thought. Can you imagine being there that day? And hearing such a message on a Sunday morning. So, it certainly can be applied to those seven churches.

But number two, it can be applied to any church down through history. You can find any or all of these churches or these categories of churches down through history. I believe personally you can find these different types of churches today.

So that's another way that we can apply it. And that's the way that we will mostly be applying it here and through the message. Taking these churches as categories, as general descriptions of the condition of certain types of churches, and looking at it that way, and gleaning from it, and applying and learning what we can from it.

There's another way that you can apply these seven churches. And I believe there's some wisdom in it. And that is to go down through and look at church history.

And look at the different eras down through church history. If you do it that way, you begin with the church at Ephesus. And there you have the apostolic age when the apostles were alive.

The churches were right. The churches were standing for what was right. And yet, there was some waning of their love, of their relationship to God.

We know that just simply by the writings. The writings of Paul. The writings of Peter.

The writings of the apostle John. I believe we could say that that was that age right there. Then the second one is the faithful, persecuted church.

What about the persecuted church? Well, after the apostolic age, there was an age in the history of the church when the church was persecuted. In fact, there were ten waves of persecution that followed the age of the apostles. It was a purifying age.

The church was hot. The church was being persecuted. There was much trouble on every hand.

So we could make that application. The next category is the worldly church. And could we say this morning, just by way of application, that when Constantine came on the scene and the church and the state married each other, and all of a sudden it became popular to be a Christian, that all of a sudden a worldly church began to settle in.

An acceptable worldly church. And there was an age or an era in the history of the church when there was an acceptable worldly church. It didn't have much influence, as we'll see.

Following that came a corrupt church. A corrupt church. You know, and that's a little bit how it goes, isn't it? You go from an acceptable worldly church when everything seems to be okay, but yet you have the applause of the world and everyone speaks well of you, and it's popular to be a Christian, and you move from that stage into a corrupt church where evil is allowed, where sin is there, where fornication and impurities are not dealt with.

And there you have a corrupt church. And I believe that there followed after the age of the acceptable worldly church a corrupted church. And from there, in church history, there was about 1,000 years that historians call the dark ages.

And there was a dead church. No light. No fire.

No zeal. And then after that, we have a faithful church rising up. And could we say here this morning the reformation? All of a sudden, the Word of God comes on the scene again and the name of Jesus becomes a precious name and salvation by faith in Christ rises forth and out of there then comes sanctification and holy living and all of these things and a modern missionary movement and missionaries passed all over the world and revival in America and revival in Wales and all those things.

And then lastly, a lukewarm church a falling away at the end at the last of the last days a falling away a turning away a lukewarmness a don't care I believe that we could at least apply these seven to the different eras of church history I'm not dogmatic on all of that and then fourthly we can also apply it to our own individual lives because churches are made up of individuals and if the church at Ephesus was a church that lost its first love it didn't lose its first love in mass it lost its first love one by one by one by one because churches are made up of individuals so therefore I believe that it's also worthy for us even this morning and next week to find some practical personal applications out of the messages to the seven churches because churches are made up of individuals

alright now let us turn to chapter two and we'll look at the first one under 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 and I think it's worthy for us to note what Christ used what part of the description of his being he used as he wrote to the church at Ephesus I'm the one who holds the seven stars in my right hand and I walk in the middle of the candlesticks which are the seven churches I know thy works then Christ begins to describe this active orthodox church and it's very commendable it's commendable what we see here of the church at Ephesus I know thy works and thy labor and thy patience and how thou canst not bear them which are evil so you see they're

holding on to some good things here they're working for God they're laboring and that word labor means toil it doesn't mean just a little work here and there that word labor means toil they're in the work I mean they're on the front line they're doing a work for God they're patient that they're enduring they don't like evil they can't bear those that are evil if there would be sin among them they deal with it immediately very commendable thou hast tried them which say that they are apostles and are not and hast found them to be liars they have discernment they are dealing with things they have their eyes open they're prudent like brother Moe said and there are those who say that they're apostles but they have tried them they've discerned them they've looked at their lives they've

discerned what they're saying and they've found them to not be apostles and Christ is commending them they're sharp I mean they're on target those apostles that come around there they see them and they say you're not an apostle and thou hast borne and thou hast patience and for my namesake hast labored and hast not fainted oh, we see the motivation there they have right motivation they're laboring for Christ's namesake they have bore the load they're a good church it's a good church anybody would want to be there who loves the Lord it's a good church things are happening there they're working for God nevertheless I have somewhat against thee because thou hast left thy first love now it's good for us in this situation here with the church at Ephesus since we have some scripture that show

us a clear account of their beginning because that's what Christ is referring to right here in this scripture he's saying you have left your first love and in the next verse he says remember where you used to be well the church at Ephesus has a beautiful beginning you can find it in Acts chapter 19 the apostle Paul he went there to Ephesus and when he got there he found certain disciples I believe there were 12 disciples there and he asked them have you received the Holy Ghost since you believe? and they being untaught

they said we haven't even heard that there be a Holy Ghost and Paul begins to speak to them and he said well in what name then were you baptized? well, baptism of John well he said you need to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus He is the Savior John was just pointing

to Him but you need to be baptized in His name well, let's do it I mean, they were open they were hungry they were teachable well then let's do it so it is and when he finished that he laid hands on them and the Bible says they were filled with the Holy Ghost the Spirit of God came on them just like it did on the apostles there and the disciples in the upper room the Spirit of God came on them and they were filled with the Holy Ghost they began to speak in tongues as the Spirit of God gave them utterance and from there a mighty revival broke out in Ephesus I mean, there was a church birthed in the spirit of revival had a beautiful beginning people started getting born again I mean, the news spread throughout the city of Ephesus persecution came because of it and people began to hear and

it passed by word of mouth from this one to this one to this one and soon there were so many who were repenting of the evil deeds of their life that they just made a big bonfire right there in the center downtown Ephesus they had a bonfire burned a bunch of books 50,000 pieces of silver worth a large amount of money I don't know how much that would be worth now but I know it'd be a lot of money I'll tell you, that'd make a commotion around here too if about three or four hundred people in downtown Lancaster started a bonfire in the city square down there gathered all their evil books and all their drugs and all their cigarettes and all their booze and all their music and all their games and all their junk and burned it in the downtown city square I guarantee you'd make front page but

that's the beginnings that the church in Ephesus had you know, it's awesome when you think about it that that's where they were but that they had lost that now they were still right and they were still serving and they were still preaching and they were still discerning and they were still standing for right and they were still bearing and they were still being patient and they were doing many things right it was an Orthodox church everything right in a row but when you consider their beginning it doesn't look so good, does it? if they lost their first love always been a blessing this morning to know that the Lord Jesus He can discern the best of all because He knows the beginning and He knows where we're at now many times we would just look at the church in Ephesus and say, what a

beautiful church but not if you know how it began there was a fire among them there was a sweet spirit in that place they were in love with the Lord Jesus they were excited about what God was doing in their life that was their beginning it was their first love they were in love with the Lord Jesus the fellowship was sweet I could safely say they had the same kind of experience there that the church at Jerusalem had on the day of Pentecost the fellowship was sweet the breaking of bread was lovely the preaching, they went house to house they were sharing with everyone communion was sweet prayer meetings were hot everything was beautiful souls were being saved on the left and on the right and here we are maybe 30 or 20 years later and He who has the wisdom and the understanding like nobody

else He who has the seven stars in His right hand and walks in the midst of the seven churches He knows how it used to be and sends a message to the church at Ephesus and says, nevertheless I have someone against you there's one thing just one some might say, oh but it's just one thing yes, but it is the one thing that is going to affect all the other things that are mentioned and the Lord Jesus knows that if He doesn't deal with that one thing all those other things will not be there very long can we this morning receive from the Lord a message an admonition an evaluation for us also is that one thing missing among us oh, visitors will come and they do and praise God for them but visitors will come not knowing everything they'll

come and say it's beautiful here the fellowship is sweet

here I like the way you live I like the way you order your families I like the song service oh, how you sing and you do this and you do that but He who walks in the midst of charity Christian fellowship and He knows and sees the beginning and the end all together can we learn something from the message to the church at Ephesus this morning notice what God says to the church at Ephesus remember therefore from whence thou art fallen and repent and do the first works you see they remember remember how you got your first love repent and do the first works remember the way it was remember your prayer meetings remember your fervor remember your broken heart remember the sensitivity to sin and remember, remember, remember and do those first works and I think that's worthy for us this morning now

look at the imperative here in the middle of verse 5 God says or else you ever hear that phrase? maybe your mom or dad told you that you go and do that or else and when mom or dad said that what did dad mean? or else he didn't need to say anything else God says remember therefore from where you have fallen and do the first works or else I will come unto thee quickly and will remove thy candlestick out of its place except thou repent now what is the candlestick? can anybody tell me? okay, God's blessing pardon me? the testimony of the church God's presence God's spirit you know what it says in the book of Revelation is the candlestick? the candlestick is the church that's what he says in chapter 1 he said the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand and the seven

golden candlesticks the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches now what is he saying? no church! so you you're gonna hold on to your orthodoxy and you're gonna stand for what's right and you're gonna judge those that are evil but if you're not going to find yet first love which made the testimony that you have someday there will not be a church there anymore that's what God is saying there doesn't sound very optional to me it sounds imperative God is saying to the church at Ephesus or else or else but this thou hast that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans which I also hate and as near as I can understand those are a worldly a group of people who teach kind of a mixture in the world righteousness and

worldliness together verse 7 he that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches and to the church at Ephesus he says to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God now let me ask you a question is that a special promise to a special group of people or is that simply one of the promises that's given to each and every child of God I mean the way I understand it to those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life we're gonna get to eat from the tree of life which is in the midst of heaven we get to eat from that tree that's no special blessing to some special person who overcomes while everybody else doesn't overcome that is simply one of the blessings of the child of God who is faithful unto the end

and goes to heaven when he dies I think it's good for us to look at that put that into context there lest we think it's for somebody else what is God saying to us this morning what can we learn from the church at Ephesus this morning corporately and individually God will have nothing less than our first love right God will have nothing less than our first love oh, but brother Danny you don't understand all that I've been through you don't know the trials I've been facing you don't know what's been coming my way we can't go by all that we have to go by what God says in His Word and God said to the church at Ephesus good church I mean it was a good church if we would have visited there I think we would have been in awe if we would have visited the church at Ephesus the Sunday before this

letter arrived there if we would have went there I think we would have been in awe man, nice church good fellowship things are in order solid pastor preachers this, that everything's nice here but the next Sunday brethren we have a letter from the beloved Apostle John he has a letter for us and we read it oh may God help us as a church to not grow complacent in our church life may God help us as individuals to not grow cold and complacent I'm not talking about getting worldly now I'm not talking about that we're just talking about everything in order I mean your house is in order your business is in order your clothes are in order you know, everything's right except that sweet love that sweet love of Jesus is not in order God says this morning we need to make it right we need to make it

right we need to repent alright, let's look at the next one the blameless persecuted church in verse 8 and under the angel of the church in Smyrna write these things saith the first and the last which was dead and is alive and that's interesting that he says that to the persecuted church because many of them are going to die for their faith it's interesting that he would say I am he that was dead and now I'm alive a word of encouragement to them but he goes on to say I know thy works and this church it seems to be a blameless church doesn't have a lot of admonition not a lot of corrections to be made and there seems to be some wisdom in that as I've said before maybe we could just use a good old dose of persecution but I know thy works he says and I know thy tribulation and I know thy

poverty but thou art rich that's in parenthesis and I wrote in my bible here this is the poor rich church later we'll look at the rich poor church but this is the poor rich church and the Lord Jesus said I know about you I walk in the midst of you I know your tribulation I know your poverty and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not but are the synagogue of Satan fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison that ye may be tried and ye shall have tribulation ten days be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life the blameless persecuted church of Smyrna what a beautiful testimony they have they are enduring persecution is coming their way they are having much tribulation they are poor

probably because they are chased from this place to that place probably because the spoiling of their goods has come and life is kind of topsy-turvy for them but Jesus says yet you're rich I know your poverty I know that you don't have enough food to eat I know that your clothes are getting a bit ragged I know that your house may not be what you would like it to be I know that your belongings are not what they ought to be I know your poverty but thou art rich he says to the church at Smyrna what can we learn from the church at Smyrna well for one thing we can learn this Jesus didn't have anything bad to say about it he doesn't mention a lot of other things he could have mentioned you're standing for this you're standing for this you're doing this you're doing that but he didn't he

basically mentioned the fact that it was a persecuted church it was a blameless church and those things often they go back and forth because it was a blameless church was it a persecuted church or was it a persecuted church and therefore it's a blameless church those two are reciprocal because the Bible says all who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution and the Bible also says that those that are persecuted will be purified and made white I'm not sure but I think the thing that we can learn from it is that persecution it's coming our way I think we need to come to grips with that persecution is coming our way there are in this land that we live in multitudes and multitudes of people who don't think a thing oh they're not worried about persecution like one man said one

preacher said to my hearing don't worry about a thing the rapture will come before it gets tough for us is that right you ask the Chinese people about that one ask those in Uganda ask the Christians in Rwanda

ask the Christians in Russia ask them in Vietnam ask them in North Korea ask them oh don't worry about a thing we'll get raptured before it gets tough I tell you I believe that is a deadly teaching that is causing multitudes to go to sleep but the fact of the matter is that a purified church will be persecuted and a persecuted church will be purified and I think that we need to gird up the loins of our mind which means to prepare for action and I think we need to change our mentality and I think we need to do as one brother mentioned in our Sunday school lesson this morning we need

to train our children that way if we're going to be prudent we need to train our children we need to change their mind and how they think about persecution because it's going to come there will be those who say they are Jews and they are not but they are of the synagogue of Satan and I believe that speaks about deception deception false Christ false apostles false preachers and teachers deceivers creeping in saying they are Jews when they are not they are of the synagogue of Satan and the words of our Lord Jesus to the church at Smyrna and also to our hearts this morning are fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer now that's very interesting you know we can't do that in our natural in the natural when you think about standing before a firing squad when you think about somebody

putting your hands clamping your hand down and taking little knives and sticking them between your finger and your fingernail that's not a very exciting thing to think about but God says fear none of those things which they will do to you say well brother Denny how do I not fear that you have to look when those thoughts come your way you have to translate those thoughts into thoughts of faith and the faithfulness of God and that God will help you in that time and God will give you what you need in that hour that you stand that's what you have to do I remember one of the children when it was time for baptism one of their biggest struggles for baptism was they were afraid that that brother Denny might ask are you willing to die for Jesus and all the fear of persecution did so grip that

young heart that there was a holding back for baptism God doesn't want us to fear those things the opposite of fear is faith and confidence in a living God and I believe that if we are faithful unto God now God will give us the grace that we need in that hour that we fear none of those things but I believe that even now if we spend our time in fear of those things we will not have grace under the church at Smyrna Jesus writes oh bless you church at Smyrna you poor rich church you persecuted church don't fear those things which they can do unto you don't fear the things that you're going to suffer do not be afraid of them and I believe that we can receive that admonition from the Lord Jesus this morning to fear none of those things which we are going to suffer may God help us I think we'll

finish up here this morning fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison plan on it look forward to it memorize your bible brothers and sisters you're going to have a sabbatical someday in a prison house memorize your bible because the devil shall cast some of you into prison that ye may be tried oh God will let it happen and you'll come forth as gold and you'll purify your garments while you're there ye shall have tribulation ten days but be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life now that one is imperative also not faithful unto death no crown of life understand? not faithful unto death no crown of life here's what it says it means what it says by the way well let me tell you what it says it means this if I

find myself in a prison someday and they call me out before the magistrates and the magistrate points a gun at my head and says if you deny Jesus I'll let you live and I stand there and say I deny Jesus and I don't he is not my Lord and he is not my Savior and that man looks at me with disgust which they often do and blows my brains out anyway no crown of life that's what it means no crown of life God put those words

in his bible they're words of love for us so that in that day and in that hour we are on our knees and the gun is pointed at our head we'll be faithful unto the death there will be something inside of us a conviction that will settle down in our heart a strength of the spirit of God which will line up with what we believe in our hearts and it will keep us in that hour and

we'll let him blow our head off and go to heaven praise God that is what it means and I will give thee a crown of life he that hath ear let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death look at the context of those verses brothers and sisters look at the context the context is awesome does that sound like a special blessing for a select few who persevere and press through and overcome and find a higher level of a Christian life no that's just simply part of the inheritance of every single child of God not being hurt of the second death he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death alright I think we're going to finish with these two and we'll save the other five for next Sunday and put them together but I believe that

just like to the church at Ephesus and the church at Smyrna to us also these words are words that can help us these are words that we need to take heed to we need to let them settle down over our heart and cause an earnestness to settle in us because the facts are facts we live in the last of the last days that I'm sure of I don't know the day and I don't know the hour but I'm sure that we live in the last of the last days that I'm sure of oh may God help us to be one of those churches that is awake in the last of the last days shall we kneel together in prayer our Father in heaven God we want to thank you for these love letters dear God that you've given to us this morning yes they're awesome words they cause fear to rise in our hearts they cause us to tremble but oh Father we know that

it's good to tremble and it's good to have a sobriety settle down over our hearts and Father we pray that you will take the words that you wrote to the church at Ephesus and to the church at Smyrna and just let them sink deep down in our hearts God I believe these are our words for us Lord these first two churches they're for us Lord I know they are I believe they apply to us God in special ways and oh Father we pray that you will give us sense to these words Father even as in the lesson before dear God you would make us a people who discern the signs of the times that we know the seasons and we know the times that we live in oh Father may the Spirit of God quicken our hearts that we may know the times that we live in God we plead with you Father to do that and oh God we pray make us all

that you want us to be Lord you know the needs that we have you know the flounderings dear God you know that sometimes the hearts are cold oh Father we pray you do the work you use the message use your word Father by your Spirit in each and every one of our lives and God as a church make us all that you want us to be we want to be one of those faithful churches that is gazing heavenward in that day and that hour when our Lord doth come Lord that is our desire I know it is we ask you Lord to help us with it in Jesus name Amen

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