

Patmos Christians

by Vance Havner

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being a Patmos Christian, who is faithful to Jesus Christ even in the face of persecution and adversity, and who seeks a fresh experience of Jesus Christ.

Duration: 40:01

Scripture: 1 Samuel 3:9, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 11:15, Mark 4:23, John 13:13, Revelation 1:9, Revelation 1:12

Topics: "Patmos"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the need for the church to have a true vision of Jesus, rather than just a pleasant image of the man of Galilee. He criticizes the church's dependence on devices like TV and radio, which can distract from hearing God's voice. The preacher encourages the congregation to turn their ears towards Jesus and listen to what God has to say. He also urges them to live in fellowship with the Lord and not be consumed by worldly concerns.

Transcript

I'm reading from Revelation, the first chapter, beginning with verse 9. I, John, who oh so am your brother and companion in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Atmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ, I was in the spirit on the Lord's day and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, and what thou seest, write in a book and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia, and to Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me, and being turned I saw seven golden candlesticks. And in the midst of the seven candlesticks, one likened to the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girded up the with a golden girdle.

His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire. And his feet likened to 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 short two-edged sword.

And his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not, I am the first and the last.

I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive forever, and have the keys of hell and of death. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.

The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks.

The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches. I don't suppose there's ever been a time when we've had so many books and lectures and sermons and articles and study courses, panel discussions and symposiums. Brother Tozer says a symposium is where we pool our ignorance.

I don't think we've ever had so many get-togethers discussing what is the future of Christianity and the Church. They're beginning to call this the post-Christian era. We're beginning to hear that Protestantism is losing ground.

We see a revolution in theology, Christian standards of conduct, and in missions. Missionary leaders are disagreed as to how to deal with communism, nationalism, and world religions. The doors are closing the world around.

America is swept by a tidal wave of materialism and immorality, lawlessness. What does it all mean? I do not come tonight as an expert, but because I'm not an expert, it does not embarrass me in the least. I'm not at all self-conscious, because the experts are not helping us anyhow these days.

We've never had more PhDs than now who think they have the answer when they don't even know what the question is. We're suffering from a flood of words and a famine of ideas, which is about all that most of them have for us. In a time like this, thank God, any man who knows the Lord and knows the Bible to some extent can stand with confidence and not be ashamed, because we have the answer.

William Jennings Bryan gained national fame all of a sudden. He was an unheard-of young politician from Nebraska when he leaped into fame after a number of orators had failed to subdue that boisterous democratic convention, and everybody had given up. Senator Tillman of South Carolina had tried to calm them and only made everybody madder.

Then William Jennings Bryan stood up, and with that matchless voice of his, which never needed an amplifier to reach the remotest corner of any auditorium, with that voice and with that gentlemanly manner, began by saying, it would be presumptuous for me to present myself against the gentlemen who have preceded me if this were a mere measuring of abilities. But the humblest citizen of the land, when clad in the armor of a righteous cause, is stronger than all the hosts of error. Well, I'm not surprised that he swept the deck.

Anybody who could start off with an exhortium like that and then just keep climbing. Now, in a much smaller way, any humble minister and any Christian can stand in an hour like this, well aware of the fact that the humblest member of God's kingdom, with a Bible before him and in the Holy Spirit, is stronger than all the hosts of error. So I don't hesitate to turn prophet in the light of the word of God and say that I foresee three possibilities.

One is the return of our Lord. His coming is a certainty. His soon coming is a possibility.

Some of us believe it's very near. I know that some say, well, signs, signs, we've had these signs all through the years. They don't mean a thing.

Yes, we have had many of them off and on through the years, but never have they converged simultaneously as they do now. And that's different. The second possibility is that Western civilization may

be overcome, as the Roman Empire was by the barbarians, and the church could be driven underground, not destroyed.

The early church wasn't destroyed by the barbarians. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And it might not be a total disaster if the church were driven underground.

She might develop more vitality under the ground than she's showing above the ground at the present time. The Christians of the catacombs, you will remember, upset the Caesareans of the Colosseum and put them out of business, to begin with. The third possibility is that of a spiritual awakening.

If you want to call it revival, all right. Although I must confess that I believe we have just practically worn out the good word these days. And sometimes I almost decide to declare a moratorium on the word revival, just to give everybody a rest.

Because like the weather, everybody discusses it, and nobody does much about it. Maybe it would be a fine thing if we called it something else. And it might refresh us a bit.

It's a good word. It's not a New Testament word. It's an Old Testament word.

And we're scared of the New Testament counterpart, which is repentance, which is the underside of revival. Revival is God coming down. Repentance is man's response to the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart, bringing him to repentance.

I don't hear much about repentance. Everybody says we need a revival. But have you ever paid much attention to how many people you ever hear say we ought to repent? You don't hear much about that, do you? Well, that's the underside of the matter.

And that's our side. I bet you don't hear it. We need the work of the Holy Spirit, somebody says.

Yes, of course we do. That's what revival is. That's what repentance is.

But again, don't forget that the Holy Spirit testifies of the Lord Jesus Christ. My Lord said, howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth, for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak, and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and show it unto you.

Now, here the Trinity comes into the verse. All things that the Father hath are mine. Therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and show it unto you.

Now, that's the program. Dr. F. B. Meyer used to say, never make the Holy Spirit the figurehead of any movement. Because if you make the Holy Spirit the figurehead of the movement, you've gotten out of line.

The Holy Spirit breaks on Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit presents the Lord Jesus Christ. John 7.39 says that the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Do not yet. Of course, that refers to Pentecost, chronologically, I know that. But the application is this, that the Holy Spirit is never given in revival power until Jesus is glorified, until the desire of our hearts and the purpose of the whole matter is to glorify the Lord.

If we want a revival in order to get more Church members, he's not going to visit us. If we want a revival to enhance the reputation of the revivals, or for any other reason, whatever, except to glorify Jesus Christ, then you can't claim this. Now, if I were to ask you tonight, do you think we're having revival today generally? I think you'd have to answer, not yet.

Same words. If I were to ask you, is your Church having revival? I believe most of you would have to say, not yet. And I wonder if I ask you, have you had a revival lately? Would you have to say, not yet? And maybe the trouble is that the Holy Spirit is not yet given, because in either case, Jesus is not yet glorified.

When you hear people bragging about some great experience they've had of the Spirit, and they never get any further, they look out. Because the Holy Spirit testifies of my Lord. Now, we call this book the Acts of the Apostles.

And of course, you know how many times it's been said that it's really the Acts of the Holy Spirit, but then, beloved, it's the Acts of Jesus Christ. Because all he began to do in Luke, he's doing, this is the unfinished work of Christ. Thank God for his finished work.

This is the unfinished work of Jesus Christ. So when I say that we need a revival, or we need a spiritual awakening, or a fresh work of the Spirit, I'd rather go a little further and say that what we need is a fresh experience of Jesus Christ. Now, you have the pattern here in Revelation 1, and it's a pattern for all time.

I hear people say we need to get back to Pentecost. I don't know what some of them mean, but I'd rather say if we're going to talk about getting back to anything, and I don't know that we ought to put it that way anyhow, but if you must put it that way, why not say let's get back to Patmos? There's a real sense in which we need to get back to the first chapter of Revelation. Now, the conditions were very much like our own today.

The early church was being persecuted under Domitian, and the church had its back to the wall and was fighting for survival. Some of the Christians had lost their lives, and some had been insulted, and others had been boycotted in their businesses, and all of them were asked to worship the emperor, and it was Caesar or Christ, and it was a real crisis. Here was John, the surviving apostle, exiled on Patmos, that rock in a restless sea, ten miles long, five miles wide, and out there alone in all that seclusion.

It was a dark day for John, even as it was a dark day for Christianity, and I can just see that great old apostle walking back and forth along the beach, and no matter which way he looked, always there was that blue skyline. He was a prisoner shut in by the sea, and I'm not surprised that when he got clear through to the 21st chapter and described the blessed age to come, he put in that word, and there was no more sea, because he had all the sea he wanted for the rest of his life. Symbol of seclusion, no more sea.

Well, it was a dark day, and John might have asked, why did this have to happen to me? They need me in Ephesus, they need me all among these young churches. Has it come to this? And I've not been promoted. Why, this isn't a bigger salary, and yet Patmos was a promotion, because without Patmos there would have been no apocalypse.

John was not a runaway, he certainly was not a castaway. He was on Patmos, verse 9, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Our beloved loyalty to Jesus Christ does not always mean higher station or ecclesiastical advancement.

Our young preachers today need to learn that all over again. I wish there were some way of driving that home to some of our aspiring young preachers, that faithfulness to Jesus Christ may land you even in 1961 on a Patmos. There are some preachers today in magnificent pulpits in America who, if they should come to a Patmos experience of Jesus Christ, and would stand in that pulpit next Sunday and tell it, might be asked to leave that pulpit within a few weeks, because that congregation would not choose to have that sort of preaching Sunday after Sunday.

Now, some of God's greatest preachers, why, there was Jonathan Edwards, who, because he proclaimed the truth of God, was pitched out on his ear, practically, out of his pastor. Many a man has had such an experience. There is, however, promotion in it, if you take it like John did.

Not only was the early church persecuted by the world, but it was attacked from within by false doctrine and worldliness, and the devil is using the same strategy today. Pressure from without, communism and world religions, and then pressure from within, heresy, false doctrine, worldliness, the beast from the sea, and the false prophet, and the harlot babble, and all these forces are converging. We American Christians have not been put on Patmos yet.

And yet, a true Christian in 1961 isn't exiled. Pilgrims and strangers, why, that's one meaning there. We're aliens and exiles, the Bible says.

And in spite of a lot of foolish things that are getting into even some evangelical publications these days, in spite of some very foolish things about how we must become chummy with Sodom and Gomorrah in order to convert them, a faithful Christian is an isolated John on Patmos in the business world, and in the social world, and even in the religious world today. Now, I'm not talking about false isolationism. There are two kinds of isolation.

Elijah is an example of one. Elijah under the juniper. He got scared of Jezebel and took off to the wilderness as fast as he could go, and then finally stumbled and fell exhausted, and said, Lord, all the good folks are gone but me, and I'm not feeling so well myself.

Now, that's false isolationism. I'm the surviving saint. Then God spoke to him and said, in effect, snap out of it.

Well, I've got lots of people who haven't bowed the bell. Now, let's get going here and resume your duty. Well, beware now, beloved, of that self-imposed isolation of Elijah under the juniper.

That's one thing, and John on Patmos is another. And sometimes, dear people, take the I'm the only one. Everybody else is in the great apostasy but me.

And that thing grows until it becomes an obsession. All the good folks are gone in this neighborhood but me, Lord. And I have a feeling that the Lord is saying to you, snap out of it.

And I think you ought to snap out of it. I think if you were to hunt around over town, you'd find some other saints that hadn't bowed the bell. And so let's beware of this.

But there is a loneliness, a true loneliness of a John on Patmos. At least there was privacy. He had time to think, and that's something these days.

You start out today and walking along just trying to think, and somebody will run over you with an automobile and kill you. John could walk up and down the beach and talk to God and ponder the situation and get more information from headquarters, and that's something. There was a time when a man's home was his castle.

Not now with TV breaking right through the walls into the living room. You can't get away. But here's a man who has a chance to get news from heaven.

Now what did he do? Well, he saw Jesus Christ. And that's the great need of the hour. You will observe, beloved, that he did not see the Savior in the same form that he'd known years ago in Galilee.

Not even in the form of the post-resurrection appearance. What he saw was a glorified Christ. And he did not lay his head on the breast of this Christ as he had laid his head on the breast of the Christ that he knew back in the days of his flesh.

He dropped like a dead man in the presence of this Christ. A lot of dear people come to church on Sunday and want the minister to preach a pleasant little sermon about the man of Galilee who went about doing good and had nowhere to lay his head. And I thank God for that phase of my Lord's life and ministry.

But in all seriousness, we are not dealing now primarily with that aspect of our Lord. We need the church, need the fresh vision of Christ crucified, risen, ascended, glorified, and coming with his eyes like fire and his countenance like the sun and his voice like the salish view of the Lord that might strike us before him. I wonder if that isn't the reason why some people don't want this sort of presentation of Christ in some of our comfortable churches on Sunday morning.

It would be too disturbing. They might fall at his feet as dead men. We might have a Sunday morning service that would be the talk of the town.

And for once it might be an experience instead of a performance. And so they say, don't give us that. It's too disturbing.

Now, what did this Christ of Patmos say to this troubled church and its angel and first of all to this apostle? Well, Dr. Campbell Morgan used to divide these letters with his alliterative style into a message of commendation and a message of complaint and a message of counsel. And practically every one of these letters has that, although there were a couple of cases where the Lord couldn't say anything commendable about some of the churches. But I would like to be a little homelier than that and put it this way.

I think in most cases you have this division of the message, what is right, what is wrong and what to do. And that just about sizes it up. Now, what was right in the church? My Lord said every good thing he could say about these churches.

He commended Ephesus for works and labor and patience and persistence. And he commended Smyrna for faithfulness under persecution. And he said to Pergamos, thou hast held fast my name and has not denied the faith.

And he commended even Parthara for works and charity and service and faith and patience and progress and even in Sardis. It says even in Sardis. And sometimes when I get into a church situation that looks pretty nearly hopeless, I'm reminded my Lord said thou hast a few even in Sardis who have not defiled

their garments.

And Philadelphia, thou hast kept the word of my patience. Sometimes we get so busy pointing out the faults of Christians and the failures of churches that we don't give credit where credit is due. I think we overlook faithful Christians who are living for God under great difficulties right in our congregations.

I think there are many people today who are martyrs in the best sense of the word. They don't want any credit for it. They wouldn't tell you about it.

Only God knows what goes on in the average church congregation today and what some people are going through for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I don't think we ought to just lump everybody into one aggregation and say, oh, nobody cares today. You don't have any faithful Christians except in Moscow and the First Baptist Church or over in Korea or over in some of the indigenous churches.

We have some faithful people right in our churches today, and God is going to give them a great reward in the world to come. And then I think of some of these preachers who go quietly about their duties year in and year out with a maximum of criticism and a minimum of praise. A little boy who said it seemed like we never have anything for dinner on Sunday but roasted preachers was coming very near to the truth.

They do get roasted and skinned alive, and it is well that we don't serve the Lord to be appreciated. If you are starting out in God's service for appreciation, my friend, that is a rare commodity. And I would advise you to find a better objective than that.

Dr. George Truitt used to preach a great sermon on the need for encouragement. And I do believe that there are a great many people today who would perk up again. Oh, I know they ought to pray and they ought to go to the Lord and roll their burden on him and all the rest of it.

But sometimes God commissions you to go and say a kind and encouraging word to them and give them a little lift. That is one way God answers prayer. And sometimes we have said harsh things.

I wonder if anybody in this place tonight would be man enough, woman enough, honest enough to confess that you have said critical things about your preacher. And you haven't been to him lately with a word of encouragement for whatever good there was in him and for whatever good thing he did say. And during the Civil War, that gray line of Confederates was pretty thin before Richmond.

But they say, I heard an old veteran tell it years ago. He said some nights we were scattered all along that line, hadn't had much to eat for days, our tattered uniforms. We stood there lonely and it looked like that the cause was hopeless, as indeed it was.

But he said we developed a habit of walking over to the next fellow in the dark and nudging him by way of saying, I'm here too, and so don't get too blue. There are several of us here yet in the line. And you know, there come times in the battle of the Lord, beloved, the line's a little thin today.

And the powers of evil are attacking the ramparts of truth. And it would be a good thing if instead of criticizing somebody, if they're in the same army. They may not see everything like you do, but if they love the Lord, maybe you owe them a nudge.

Not the kind you feel like giving them sometimes, but the other kind of a nudge and say, I'm for you, and we're standing together in the battle. Oh, you say they'll get it one day when the Lord says, well done. Yes,

but it wouldn't kill you to say, well done.

You've done a good job. Do it gently, they might have a hard time. Some of these churches you'd think didn't deserve much, but he had a good word wherever he could.

But then he had a word of complaint too. What's wrong? Three times I have this against thee. I have a few things against thee, Ephesus, Pergamos, Thyatira.

How long has it been since you took time out to ask, what does the Lord have against me? I have asked this in these 22 years that I've been going from one church to another, in one week, one church meetings. That's my ministry, mostly the year round. I'm a one church preacher.

I stay with the local church. I believe with all my heart in the work of the local church. I believe that after all other organizations have come and gone, the old local church will be plodding along with all its headaches and heartaches, and I'm for the local church.

I know they make lots of mistakes, but I don't stand on the outside and knock them, I stand on the inside and exhort them. And I have found again and again that it's pretty hard to get this question over to them. They don't like to ask the Lord, what do you have against me? But the Lord does have things against us, and it's a profitable inquiry.

At Ephesus, they'd left their first love, and Pergamos and Thyatira had tolerated false doctrine and loose living. Now mind you, they had tolerated it. And he called on the good people in Pergamos, not the Balaamites.

He called on the good people to repent for putting up with the Balaamites. God judges you as much by what you tolerate as by what you practice. There are people today who don't actively engage in certain forms of iniquity, but they tolerate sin in their lives, or in the church.

Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, you put up with Jezebel, you allow Jezebel to carry on her idolatry. What are you tolerating? You wouldn't do it yourself, you say, but what is the church tolerating today? And there was Sardis with its nominal Christianity. I think that's where we get that term.

Thou hath the name to be a lot nominal. Oh, I can just imagine those folks at Sardis gathering on Sunday morning for that letter that was coming to be read by the angel of the church. And I'm sure those folks said, well now, we're going to really get praise and commendation this morning because we've got a name all over the community and all over the country.

Everybody says this is a live, live church. Well, that's the talk of the town. And they can't wait for this messenger of the church to get up and read, what a wonderful church it is at Sardis.

And he stands there in the pulpit and hear all these bankers and lawyers and doctors and all these folks so proud of their self-righteousness and their big church and their big offerings and all the rest of it. And they're sitting there ready for that letter of praise. And then the preacher says, thou hast the name to be alive, but thou art dead.

And I can imagine what our shock swept over that congregation. And I can see smiles turn to scowls, and I can see demounting resentment. Why, who does he think we are? The same thing would happen today in Minion Assembly if they were confronted squarely with this message.

And then lay under seal with its lukewarmness. Now, all of these evils exist today, but you preach about them. Try preaching about them.

And leading church members sometimes will resent it, and most of the members will stay home and never darken the door of the church till next Sunday morning. I know we're unwilling to face the reproof of our Lord, for we live in a generation that cannot endure sound doctrine. And yet my Lord ends this message by saying, I'm standing at the door knocking.

Now, knocking is a disturbing process. Did you ever settle down some evening in your robe and slippers and easy chair for a nice undisturbed evening, and then there came a knock at the door? The disturbance. And here is my disturbing Lord at the door.

And we need to be disturbed. We talk about the comfort of the Holy Spirit. God grant us the discomfort of the Holy Spirit today.

I don't think we're going to know the comfort of the Spirit in its fullness till we first have known something of His discomfort. And then finally, the counsel. What's right, what's wrong, what to do, and what was it? Repent five times out of seven.

Repent. The last word to the church was not the Great Commission. Still isn't.

The last word to the church is repent. It's the last thing you can get a church to do. Notice the alternatives to repentance.

I've been reading this for years, and it never had dawned upon me till the other day, the alternatives. And it doesn't sound like, my Lord, this is terrific language. I will remove, I will fight, I will kill, I will come as a thief, I will spew thee out of my mouth.

And these are the alternatives to repentance. Repent or else. And when are we going to face the Christ of Patmos and do what he says? I almost despair of making our people see that repentance is the message of Christ to the church today.

It's the blind spot in our eye. We can see organization and education and evangelism and buildings and programs and promotion, but there is no place in our churches today for what ought to have first place repentance. There's a lot of hand-wringing because we're not meeting the challenge of the hour.

And people say, well, we need new programs and new promotion. Well, the early church had a minimum of all that, but they were filled with the Holy Spirit. And before we are ever filled with the Holy Spirit, there must be repentance.

One of the leaders in the department of evangelism in Texas of my own denomination, and you can just apply this to yours because it's true of any of them, he said, in our early history, we stressed the work of the Holy Spirit. The unbeliever must be born of the Holy Spirit to become a Christian. And following the birth of the Holy Spirit, we insisted that Christians live a Spirit-filled, Spirit-directed life.

About a generation ago, some advisors began placing more emphasis upon education, psychological methods, church buildings, counseling, organization, public relations, and so forth. These things, some of them are good. In fact, they're excellent when under the guidance and power of the Spirit.

But less and less emphasis has been placed on the necessity of a Spirit-filled life, and more emphasis on human methods, plans, and procedures. And a new generation has grown up that has not experienced the fullness of the Holy Spirit. My brother's absolutely right.

But try to get people to do something about it. The same thing in missions. Now you're hearing all kinds of things about the need of new techniques and new strategies.

We don't need that in missions as much as we need some kindling wood, such as I was preaching about last night set on fire of God. It's amazing how we dodge, whether intentionally or not, the real trouble. It's just like these new translations of the Bible.

I think it's fine if it's the right kind of a translation. I think they're helpful. But we have some dear people today who have the idea, if I can just get hold of one more translation of the Bible, then it'll be all right.

It'll open up to me. It is not a new translation of the Bible that opens it up to you. It's the Holy Spirit that opens up the Word of God to you.

And a lot of dear people are depending on one more translation, and that isn't going to do it. It's amazing how much some people get out of the King James Version by the help of the Holy Spirit. We blind our eyes to the real need.

I've gone up and down this land for all these years, engaged in trying to arouse the saints of God in the churches. And I used to make a serious mistake on Sunday morning. We had everybody there.

You know how it goes for the rest of the week. You have the faithful and the visitors. And then the next Sunday morning, here comes that other crowd back again that Jim McGinley used to call the morning glories that bloom on Sunday morning, fold up for the rest of the week.

There came the morning glories back on Sunday morning, and what should have been the best service is often the poorest of all. And I used to make my way through the week a sort of marking time until I could get at that crowd next Sunday morning. And that was a serious mistake because I already had the nucleus that God started.

I was waiting for a crowd to come that I didn't need at that particular stage. I had the crowd I needed, the faithful. You begin with the kindling ones.

You start with those who will mean business and who will respond. But the message ends with our Lord at the door and knocking, and he says, If any man, better still. And actually he said, If any one.

I like it that way. This is the day of collectivism and conformity and standardization. And the individual has been lost in the crowd, but my Lord restores the dignity of the individual here.

He recovers the individual out of the mass. He says, If any one, anybody in the church, any one. That's in church.

Anybody. Doesn't have to be the chairman of the board of deacons. It ought to be, maybe.

But if any one will hear my voice. Notice how broad it is. If any one, then notice how narrow it is.

If any one will hear my voice and open the door. It's as broad as anybody in the church. It's as narrow as the one who will hear his voice and open the door.

And whatever world conditions may be, and whatever the church situation may be, don't forget that you, you can hear his voice. And you can let the guest become the host. I've made up my mind.

I don't intend to become so hot that I fail to live in fellowship with my Lord myself. You can get so excited over newspaper headlines and radio commentators that you fail to do what you can do in such a time. Let him in and suck with me.

The world's condition is one thing, but you can get so bothered about the world's condition that you forget the Lord's commission. Now, whatever happens, you make sure that you set your house in order. And above all this din and pandemonium, you can hear his voice.

When you let him into your life, you let him into your church after all. Lord Jesus, thou art standing outside the fast-closed door, in lowly patience waiting to cross the threshold of war. Shame on us Christian brothers, his name and sign who bear.

Oh shame, thrice shame upon us, to keep him standing there. How do you go about this experience? I just leave the outline with you. And you go through it and make it your own.

How did John? Well, he was in Patmos, verse 9, the place of God's choosing. Are you in the place of God's choosing? And are you where you are for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ? You may be a housewife. You say, well, I'm not an apostle.

You can be in your Patmos, the place of God's will. And then verse 10, in the Spirit. The right condition of mind and heart, where sins confessed and life yielded and filled with the Spirit.

I don't mean a mere emotional experience. It doesn't say John was in good spirits on the Lord's day. He was in the Spirit.

And you've invited him to take over. And you want to be not only owned, but operated by the Holy Spirit. And then you believe that he does take over.

And then verse 10, in Patmos, in the Spirit, I heard. You're going to hear if you're where you ought to be and if you're in the Spirit. The big question is not, is God speaking? The big question is, are you listening? He said, that's an ear.

Let him hear. Everybody's studying today how to talk. We've got all kinds of courses on how to talk.

You don't have any courses on how to listen. And that's what we need. After all, God gave us two ears to hear with and only one mouth, thank the Lord.

And if you exercise the gift that he gave you for, hear it! Speak, Lord, for thy servant, hear it! My friend Wilmus Chase said he wouldn't be surprised. The next generation is not equipped with hearing aids because we live in such a den, for one thing, and then we depend on devices. And the more you depend on devices, why, the more you have to depend on devices.

And then we disregard. You can live in a noise. People turn on the TV first thing in the morning, they don't hear much that goes on through the day.

They hear it and they don't hear it. My Lord said in Matthew 13, 13 hearing, they hear not. And you can get so used to this voice that you don't hear it.

So whether the den or the devices or the disregard, you can miss the voice and it all amounts to deafness. I heard, and then verse 12, I turned to see. Note that, beloved.

When God does speak to you, turn in the direction of that voice. Incline your ear unto the Lord. Draw nigh unto God.

When Samuel heard God speak, Eli didn't say, go on back to bed and forget it. I'm the high priest around here. If God's going to say anything, he'll communicate it to me, not to you.

He said, go back and listen again. And so give yourself the opportunity of hearing what God has to say next. Not only turn your eyes up in Jesus, but turn your ears, turn your ears unto Jesus.

And then in verse 12, I saw. Now that's the order. I was in Patmos.

I was in the right place. I was in the spirit. And being in the spirit, I heard, and I turned in the direction of that.

The prayer meetings that will follow are not, that doesn't mean another service. They are a continuation of this one. Will you go into them with that in mind? And above everything else, seek to meet your Lord there, shall we think.

O blessed Holy Spirit, we pray that thou wilt come to hear the voice of our Lord. Help us to check on how it is with us tonight, whether we're in the place of thy choosing. Help us to be in the spirit with the listening ear.

And we shall hear because thou hast many things to say to us. Help us to turn in thy direction, Lord. And when we do, we shall see.

Grant us the fresh vision of thyself, we pray.

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