

GOD IS IN CHARGE

A devotional, life challenging look
at the first 11 chapters of the
Book of Revelation of Jesus the Christ

Allan Thomas Gibson



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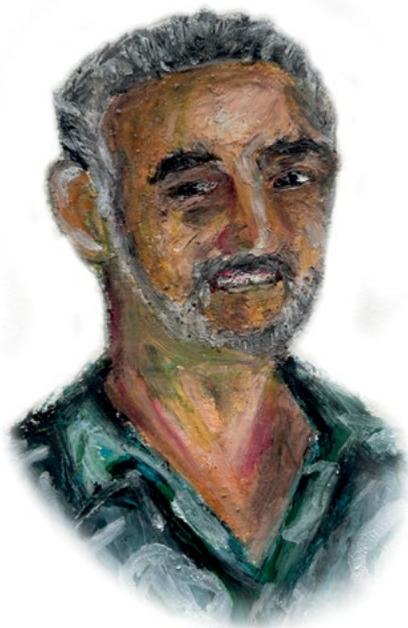


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Allan Thomas Gibson

Foreword

My father, Allan Gibson, has always been someone who is consistently committed to the word of God and prayer. His example to me was not of perfection, but of commitment, persistence and of trust in God to sustain us as we follow him. My father's theology has always been practical, but also rooted in a humble servant life and being soaked in the scriptures. Out of this lived experience we learned simple truths about how to discern between ideas, people and places that honoured God and those that didn't. Does it draw us to Jesus and does it put others before ourselves? If so then we are on the right path, if not let's stop and reconsider.

As a teacher he finds ways to bring out the important concept from a passage of scripture in a clear and engaging way. Through his words and actions he has blessed many people, in many ways and I have been greatly blessed to be his son. He has instilled in me a love for God and his word, a heart to serve others and a desire to see Jesus lifted up. My father has a strong grip on the scriptures as the true word of God but he uses them in love, never as weapon, because they themselves teach us to love and care for others.

“God IS in charge” captures the essence of God's message to us in the book of Revelation. We will see things in this world that might scare us, we might feel alone and wonder if God is still there, but God wants us to know that none of this is a surprise to him, he is still in control, we can continue to trust in him, he has a plan and he is with us. I have seen this confidence in God, throughout the many challenges and difficulties of life, consistently demonstrated by my father. He never failed to show us that if we do what we believe God wants us to do, that God will look after us and achieve his good purposes in our lives.

Phillip Allan James Curlis-Gibson

CHAPTER ONE

Revelation 1

Revelation 1:1-2

“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto his servant 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 saw.”

Revelation 1:3

“Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keeps those things that are written therein: for the time is at hand.”

Verse 1

The book starts with a statement of what it is all about..... REVEALING JESUS. It shows a side of Jesus that those who do not know Him will be uncomfortable with. It is also Jesus revealing to us what is to happen in the future and revealing divine mysteries.

In this book, we are faced with much tragedy and prompts questions:-

Why would Jesus bring devastation and Judgement?

I heard it explained, that if you are in a flood and you know before the flood comes, it is coming. If you climb on to a rock you will be saved by the rock, but if you try to swim against the flood (I'm strong, I'll be okay) the flood will smash you against the rock and harm you. The rock that would have saved you has become your destruction ... so with our Lord Jesus Christ ...

The destruction etc. is also God's final act of mercy to sinners. He is showing His reality, His anger, so that they have no excuse for rejecting Him, but instead of turning for forgiveness they curse God?

It also brings us to face the reality that those who reject Jesus will have to face God on their own.

It is the revelation given by Jesus of Jesus

It is given to Jesus by God

It is His servants that are involved

He sent

His angels to

His servant John

All things are by Him and through Him and to Him. When it all is ended it is all God's. Why then do we fuss and fret. Leave it in God's hands, Fulfill our part and leave the rest to God. (Colossians 1: 16/17)

All things will be subjected to Christ Jesus. (Heb. 2:8). Everything that was made was made by Him and He upholds all things by His power (John 1:1). It is His money, His property, His woman or man, His time, His EVERYTHING. HIS - NOT YOURS OR MINE.

Jesus said for us to learn a lesson from the lilies and the sparrows (Mat 6:28). The lesson being not to fret about the necessities of life, God has provided them (Luke 12:27). We need to operate on that basic assumption. That does not mean that we sit back and “trust God” when it is within our power to do something. “He who does not work, shall not eat”. But do not fret or worry. This keeps our mind occupied away from God (2 Thess 3:10).

Verse 2

John reminds us of his association with Jesus. He bore record of Jesus life on this earth and actually worked with Jesus and then told others about Jesus after His return to Heaven. This same John is now going to be the one that Jesus is going to use to convey the message of the things to happen at the end of the ages. These things may happen over a long period of time as the revelation does not give a strict time span.

Verse 2-3

The message is given by Jesus to John to bring US a blessing. If we read it aloud or hear it read and keep ourselves true to the things which are written.

BLESSED means:

(These are seven Greek words translated bless ...)

The following references in Revelation are all the adjective MAKARIOs which is from the root word mak: meaning LARGE - isn't that fantastic! God is going to make us large people, big and broad and full and large people. Not narrow and mean and little.

May the Lord make YOU large!

May the Lord make ME large!

Those that are to be blessed according to Revelation are:

1:3 persons who read aloud the book (Amp. Bible – in the church).

1:3 Those who hear and keep themselves true to what is written.

14:13 Those who die in the Lord.

16:15 Those who are alert when the Lord comes.

19:9 Those summoned to the marriage supper.

20:6 Those who share in the first resurrection.

22:7 Those who observe and keep the truth of this prophesy.

22:14 Those who cleanse their garment that they may have the authority and right to the tree of life and enter in through the gates of the city.

Verse 3

It is not enough to hear what is written. We must keep ourselves true to the instructions given. How often do we agree that something is wrong or that something should be done but it does not get any further than our head – we need to either pray that it will affect our emotions and spirit or simply force ourselves to obey and do what is right, even if it is a mechanical thing, but asking God to supply the love to go with it. The “To obey is better than sacrifice”. (1 Sam 15:22)

Verse 3

Always live as if the time for these things to happen is very soon. That way we will keep alert and not slide into indifference and all that goes with it. This awareness will also keep us tuned into the realities of life and help us choose our priorities. If Jesus does delay, the temptation to become dulled will grow – remind ourselves daily “He is coming soon”. (Perhaps we could do this as part of our grace at meals).

CHAPTER TWO

Revelation 1

Revelation 1:4-6

“John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace. From Him which is. And which was and which is to come: and from the seven spirits which are before His throne: and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead. The prince of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father: to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen”

Verse 4

The book is addressed to Christians – it is not a plea or a warning to unbelievers BUT to those who believe in Jesus. (see Verse 1)

He asks for them (the readers and hearers): GRACE which has all the following shades of meaning: occasions, pleasure, delight, the friendly disposition of the giver, loving kindness, the goodwill of God – its freeness – all open to all. It is the opposite of debit, works, law. It brings in us a sense (feeling) of favour bestowed, gratitude, thankfulness. It should result in us living, doing deeds of grace to others. The end result is we should be joyful, giving people.

SPIRITUAL PEACE, note: not earthly or external peace. but the peace that comes from living in Christ's kingdom. The Greek meaning – we are one with God again, like at the beginning. We have wholeness”.

It only comes from God.

“Who is and was and is to come”. God is ever present. If we can hold the concept of God always being with us, it will help us cope with the lonely spots of life and it will guide us in what we say, what we do and where we go. We need to ask ourselves “Do we want God to hear or see or be with us in that situation?” Yes or No – not Maybe or After I have done what I want.

Note that the Holy Spirit is also mentioned: possibly one with seven functions.

Verse 5

Jesus is given a number of titles.

Jesus Christ is the faithful and trustworthy witness. A witness makes a declaration of the facts. Jesus Himself IS a declaration about God. The Bible's standard of a witness is that of an eyewitness.

This letter is from two eyewitnesses. John and Jesus Christ. The Old Testament rule was that on the evidence of two witnesses a person stood condemned and was put to death. What is to follow will result in your death if you do not repent (1 John 5:6, 7,8). Just to reinforce this, there is an additional witness in verse 4, the sevenfold Holy Spirit.

The First born of the dead. First indicates that there will be others – otherwise you would use “only-born”. Who are the others? I will be one of them – so will you. What happens to us after this birth? I guess we will see later.

Prince (Ruler) of the kings of the earth. Jesus calls Satan the Prince of this world (John 14:30). Jesus and Satan cannot share. Therefore, it seems to me that the person who rules the rulers is the ultimate authority and is higher and more powerful than the rulers. Their authority is limited to and allowed by the ruler above them. Satan rules, BUT JESUS OVERRULES.

This title can also show us that if we are troubled by the earthly rulers, eg government officials, we can look to Jesus to overrule them. That can translate into us not getting hassled with things that happen. Instead, tell God about the problems, do your bit honestly and quietly and leave God to work out what is best; which may not necessarily be what we ask for. Evil or stupidity or incompetence seems to prevail, leave it with God, He will repay in the end. As I have learned a touch of His ways, it seems that He does not force (me or others), but “He achieves His purpose in the end”. Even if we suffer, we will be reborn. That is the reality! King David absolutely refused to work against God’s appointed person, King Saul, but left it to God to achieve His ends in His time frame (1 Sam 24:6). Others, including Abraham, tried to help God along, eg taking a second wife and producing Ishmael. Despite this, God still achieves His purpose of a son through Sarah (Gen 16:2) but the result of Abraham’s help, was disastrous to the Jews and now to the Christians, eg Ishmael’s descendants are now the Muslim religions.

The Apostle Paul by his actions, acknowledged the authority of the High Priest, even though the High Priest was working against God’s purposes (Acts 23: 2-5).

Our Lord Jesus only answered His accusers when ordered to do so by the High Priest (Matt 26: 62 & 63). He thus acknowledged that the person God appoints to a position must be obeyed – subject always to the overruling law of God, eg The Ten Commandments and not denying our faith in Jesus Christ.

So trust God and quietly go about your business, do what you can to stop wrong and to overcome it but know that in the end God will achieve His purpose. David replace Saul as King and Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah – and the cross was the fore deigned instrument in our Lord’s path to our redemption.

Verse 6

I have difficulty with the grammatical expression of V6. V5 starts FROM Jesus Christ – and V6 TO Him ... who freed us by His own blood. Does it refer to Jesus as God the Father? Perhaps it does not matter. I will continue with this description of Jesus/God the Father.

Verse 5

When I first read V5, I read it as from Jesus Christ to God and highlights the unity between Jesus and God. God identifies so closely with Jesus that it was He who hung on the cross. It was His blood that was spilt. Jesus and God are one. Each identified so closely with the other that what happens to one happens to the other, a persecution against Jesus' followers is taken personally by Jesus.

It was not only Jesus who hung on the cross. God – the Almighty Father hung there too. When Jesus took our sins unto Himself, God the Father separated from Him for sin cannot come near God's presence and also "you are of purer eyes than to look at uncleanness".

"My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?"

Verse 5 & 6

I suspect V5 and 6 should be the same verse: "To Him whoever loves us and has once for all loosed and freed us from our own sins by His own blood and formed us into a royal race, priests to His God and Father, to Him be the glory and the power and the majesty and the dominion throughout the ages and forever and ever. Amen. So be it."

Everything is "to Him"

every thought

every action

every desire.

Lord, how do we get to that blissful point?

God is in charge

2 Cor 10:5 “Bring every-thought captive to Jesus Christ”

John 3:3 “Reborn of the Spirit”

Rom 12:2 “Renew your mind daily – by the word of God”

1 Cor 9:27 “Bring the flesh into subjection”

Eph 5:18 “To be filled with the Holy Spirit” – and make a deliberate determined action to keep your thoughts on Jesus – or bring them to Him. “Lord if you would think this thought then I will think it too”, or, “I bring this thought captive to Jesus” and change the thought to positive. (Acts 4:31, Acts 9:17)

Our enemy is very subtle
very quiet
very persistent
very apt to put a quiet desire
or hurt into our being
we entertain it
suddenly it fills us.

A negative word
or thought
A discouraged comment
“nothing ever goes right”
That small empty feeling inside ... and
We have grieved God’s Spirit

Repent ... turn your back
Say positive uplifting things,
pray blessings on those who offend you
even if you don’t feel like it,
and the emptiness lifts.

A friend's advice to me once was "build a wall around yourself with positive determined statements"

"I am a child of God - I do not have to put up with this."

Step by step
Bring everything
"TO HIM ... "

Verse 5

John then describes God as the one
"Who ever loves us"
Psalm 139 is a classic as to God knowing us
knowing every move we make
knowing every thought and yearning
knowing every day of our lives
knowing us while we were being formed
knowing us before we were conceived.

But "EVER LOVING US" that is something different, very different.

I might know someone but not love them.
God loves us - always loves us.
Loves who?
Who does this passage apply to?

Verse 5

It applies to those who have been "loosed from their sins by Christ's blood".

Whether the “ever loves us” ties in the God for knowing those that would choose Him OR the fact that God is ever present. So past and future are all present with Him – THE END RESULT IS THE SAME – if Christ died for us then He always loves us – even when we are not perfect – He loves us yesterday, tomorrow and THIS VERY MOMENT.

“Jesus became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

It is incredible to think that God, the Creator and sustainer of all things, actually cares about, thinks about, concentrates on, delights in “Loves” (Vines Dictionary) me ... and you.

Jesus delights in those that He has loosed from their sins by His own separation.

Verse 5

“Loosed and freed us from our sins by Him own Blood”

The responsibility is thrown back onto us – Jesus has done His part – the power of sin is broken. If we are affected by it in our lives, it is because we choose to be. “Loosed”, “freed” means just that – to unbind, to release, to dismiss, to dissolve, to destroy.

“Sin” is described in many ways, one such description is “a missing of the mark” (Vines Dictionary). God’s mark is absolute perfection and the Bible is clear that only the Lord Jesus Christ achieved that. Every thought and act and will be subjected to God. To say that sin is a mere missing of the mark does not show it in its full state, Vine’s dictionary shows this “missing of the mark” in action:

1- as “the basis behind our action” – an inward element producing acts. Inside us is a desire to miss God’s mark? A contrariness that says “I will do as I want to” and if God does not like it that’s too bad! Maybe more often, it is not this blatant – usually a blocking out of the mind.

2- a “governing principle or power” – organised power, acting through the members of the body. Through the body, but sin’s power base is in the will – I will...

3- the desires of the flesh whatever they may be:

- power over others – at work, home, school, etc.

- food – that extra piece?
- self pity – nobody cares, notices, visits me, appreciates me
- laziness – not now – not today
- and the most warped one of all – the sex drive - God given and God blessed and Satan corrupted.

“There is sin unto death” (1 John 5:16), not a special act of sin, but the state or condition producing acts, says a lot to me – it is not what we do but what our governing motive is – why we do them.

David did some terrible things, yet his heart was to God when confronted with his sins. (1 Samuel 13:4)

Sin is particularly destructive when the enemy is able to keep one little thing continually going over in your mind. What comes to mind most often when you are driving the car, doing the housework? What do you find is triggered most often by some sight? What sin does the enemy most often catch you into thinking about – daydreaming about? Christ has set us free from it “For our sake He made Christ to be sin who knew no sin so that, through Him, we might become what we ought to be, approved and acceptable and in right relationship with Him (by His goodness)”. (2 Cor 5:21 Amplified)

Concentrate on what Jesus has made us, not on what we are forgiven for. “I am right in God’s sight – because of Jesus”.

Rev 1:5 tells us that Jesus has loosed us from the power of sin to dominate us – He died – He took God’s anger – He went to hell – He was in Satan’s power – God raised Him as it was impossible for death to hold Him. (Eph 1:20)

We must, however, use that freedom which Christ has given us. God does not wave magic wands – He provides us with the power, the strength, the authority, and expects us to use it. When the particular problem comes creeping quietly into our minds, or desires, we must fight it – every day – all our lives. Remember, “No temptation has taken you but such as is common to man, but God with the temptation will provide a means of escape so that you may be able to bear it”. (1 Cor 10:13)

The armour of the soldier of Christ is a good example of how God has provided instruction for us in fighting temptation. "The helmet of salvation". I pondered why each part was specific to an area – salvation for the head – the cleansing death of Christ to control our thinking. If, no Eph 6:17 not it, but when we have trouble with our thinking, we need to remind ourselves that Jesus died for us and meditate, turn that thought over to the truth - instead of keeping that person or thing in our mind, we must redirect our thoughts to be fact that Jesus died for us. "You put on the helmet of salvation".

If all else fails and we have done all we can, throw yourself before God and cry unto Him and then get up and go on your way.

Oswald Chambers in the reading for 31 January (My Utmost For His Highest) writes "God cannot deliver me while my interest is merely in my own character. Paul is unconscious of himself, he is recklessly abandoned, separated by God for one purpose – to proclaim the Gospel of God". All that I have written previously is me/us fighting temptation – and we do have to do that, BUT the reality is our whole life and being should be "separate to God for one purpose – to proclaim the Gospel of God." The changes in our character will take place as a result of that – not the other way around – not sort myself out so I can be a witness for/ of God, but proclaim the Gospel of God in word and deed and my attitude and character will become more and more a reflection of God.

Start small – say today "What would my Lord Jesus Christ do in this situation?"

"TO HIM WHO EVER LOVES US AND HAS ONCE FOR ALL LOOSED AND FREED US FROM OUR SINS BY HIS OWN BLOOD."

How?

By His death?

The God of the Old Testament

Is not dead

But His rightness

Has been fulfilled by the death of Christ

Sin always had to be paid for by death

Jesus has loosed us
Has paid the penalty and death is defeated
Now the Love of God in the resurrection
The True Father can be seen (John 3:36)
We are loosed from the power of death

Sin
My sin
Made Jesus die
He has made me free

Bondage you have no power:-
..... unless
..... I let you in
..... and let you stay

“And formed us into a kingdom - a royal race - priests to His God and Father”.
(Rev 1:6a)

Verse 6a is a continuation of V5. Why has Jesus freed us? Why did he die? So that he could present us to God as a royal race, a race of priests to His God. Our salvations had a purpose, it was not the end result. It was a means to achieve an end. This is in God's love.

“For God so loved the world that he sent His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). It is absolutely relevant: God loved us, and wanted us, and sent Jesus. However Jesus loved God the Father enough to not only go but to also bring us back as a gift to God. I/You are a gift to God from Jesus.

Not only did Jesus want to present us as a gift to God but he wants to make us a royal gift - something very special, very real, very lovely. Priests and Kings, both rulers, both people that others follow and respect.

God is in charge

We are NOT rubbish – Jesus has made us the ruling class – let us act accordingly.

Priests!

What is the function of a priest?

A go-between, to

Present God to man and

Represent man to God

Pray for

Plead for

Mankind.

We are Kings and Priests!

We are the Lord Jesus Christ's present!

To God

Ch 1:6

“To him be the glory and the power and the majesty and the dominion throughout the ages and forever and ever. Amen – be it – YEAH!

so

Amen – I agree with that.

Agree with what?

To God be: glory

 power

 majesty

 dominion

“Glory” (DOXA) primarily signified an opinion.

Who is worthy of our best opinions? Whose acts, character and nature are such that they command our respect more than any other? Only God – He does not need our good opinions to make Him glorious.

He is so immense that He overwhelms us and we give Him our “good opinions”, we glorify Him. Think of what physical things you glory in the most.

What do you praise?
What takes your breath away?
a magnificent 180° sunset?
mountains?
Waves?
a machine?
a huge spreading tree?
a beautiful horse or animal?
a beautiful person?

All these things are but a reflection of God!

Imagine how much more we need:
to praise
talk about
glorify the one they reflect!

Then think of the mental and spiritual things that you admire:

a gracious character
a loving nature in a person
a book that grips you.

These also reflect our God. Glorify the One they reflect not the thing itself,
otherwise that is how gods are made.

“Power”

Who has power?

you, your wife/husband, friend, children, boss, neighbours
anyone who influences you
these have power –
.. over you
.. something you cannot control
alcohol

anger
pettiness
lust
these all have power over you
if you cannot stop them
or if they brood inside
or catch you unaware
then they have power over you

Things have power over you. John writes “power to God”. Give God the power and the influence over you. Do not imagine that you are totally your own boss. Things have power over you so why not give God the power. Consider His wishes, His laws, His love, when you make a decision or entertain a thought or feeling.

“Majesty”

“worship His Majesty”

“To Him be all glory, honour and praise”

Do you know that song, do you feel the glory and splendour and power as it lifts you into worship. Majesty - there is no greater word to express the power and glory and anger and strength and Judgement and love of God.

Majestic is awe-inspiring, majestic is grand, majestic is to be looked up to without being gaping open. Majestic surely must be the greatest compliment. Majestic is the beauty that includes strength. Give the power over you to “Majesty” - it belongs to Him.

“Dominion”

It means “manifested power” and is derived from a root word meaning “to perfect” or “to complete”. The implications are beautiful to behold - if God has real power in our lives then we are perfected or completed!

Dominion (not domination like one human over another) is more than power

- it is manifested power or power used. Let God influence the way you live. Let His views, His desires, His ways, be the main considerations in the way we act and think and feel - GIVE HIM DOMINION OVER YOU - not only power but dominion:-

POWER IN ACTION and we will be made complete

How?

By deliberate choice, be consistent and persevering, time after time.

Deliberate - "I choose God's ways!!"

belong When do "glory and power and majesty and dominions"
to God?

Now

Tomorrow

Yesterday

Forever

God will always be there

Your current backup or people you love will not always be there, children grow up, husbands or wives die, friends move away and sometime we are not very happy with ourselves, BUT God is always present tense.

"Amen" - I agree, that's what I want.

CHAPTER THREE

Revelation 1

“Behold, He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him; and all kindred of the earth shall wail because of Him, even so. Amen. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith The Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.”

(Revelation 1:7-8)

“Lo. He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him: and all the tribes of the earth shall gaze upon Him and beat their breasts and mourn and lament over Him: even so must it be. Amen – so be it.”

Lo He is coming
Is, not maybe, but is coming
It is a sure event,
A certain thing

So what?
Rejoice, Oh Christian
Let your heart sing forth
Your redeemer lives!
He has not left you
He has conquered
He is coming back

Jesus said that there would be false Christs (saviours) and people would say “look, there he is, or here he is” (Matthew 24: 24-30). Rev 1:7 reads “every eye will see Him”, so if you didn’t see Him, then He has not returned... yet.

Those who reject Jesus or simply ignore Him will also see Him and will know that He is real and that He is God and that it is/was either He or them that must carry the result of their “doing their own thing”.

Why do people reject Jesus today? Several reasons come to mind:

1- He seems irrelevant to life today. Life is so busy and full and liberated, yet the suicide rate among 18-25 year olds (especially males) has increased dramatically in the past ten years of our liberated, do your own thing society.

2- He is not real, it’s just another story. Look carefully at children’s programs on the television or in movies or comics and you will see the common theme of a hero who is the only one who can save the world. Often he is mortally wounded and recovers or dies and regains his life again.

Two interesting verses in this context are “unless you become like little children you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matt 18:3) and “if anyone offends one of these little ones, it would be better for him if a millstone were tied around his neck and he were thrown into the midst of the sea” (Matt 18:6).

He threatens them as He leaves nothing for them to do. He has done it all in His death and all our works after our salvation must flow naturally out of our relationship with Him. We can do nothing to earn our salvation, no amount of suffering or giving or loving or even obedience to God’s laws will gain us any favour with God, outside of Jesus.

“There is none righteous - no not one” (Rom 3:10) and “No man comes unto the Father except through me” (Acts 4:12) and “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”.

When we are totally reliant
On someone else
We are threatened
We like to feel
that we have some value,
That we have something to contribute,
That we deserve
Jesus by the gift of salvation says:
The only value you have
The only way you can be saved
is by -
“God so loved you
That He gave
His only begotten Son
That whosoever
Believes in Him
Should not perish
But have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

We reject Jesus because we have to give up our own self importance, pride and self esteem. Even after we are reborn, we reject much of the Holy Spirit's leading by hanging on to our own price and stubbornness.

The false religions all spring from this basic sin in our character, as does all false or exaggerated teaching in our Christian churches. Pride in himself and his beauty was the original sin of Lucifer. Pride in our understanding, our service, our spiritual perception, our ability to lead or organise – cannot these things ultimately make us look at ourselves and away from Jesus our Lord? In themselves, we should value these things as gifts and abilities from God and be glad of the gift to us for the benefit of all. (Isaiah 14: 12-15)

“And all the tribes of the earth shall gaze upon Him and beat their breasts and mourn and lament over Him”. (Rev 1:7)

It is bad enough meeting someone that you have said something critical about – one feels uncomfortable inside BUT imagine the horror of meeting Christ Jesus and knowing that you have rejected Him, the Lord of Glory – and it is too late! Too late, and you see clearly for the first time that you are forever separated from the source and substance of your being – surely this is Hell. To be empty when there was no need, when you could have had it all, and you chose to reject Him. Mourning includes the feeling of regret or to beat the chest, this makes it an intense heart rendering regret.

To include the comment “even those who pierced Him will see Him” tells us that death is no escape. You may reject Jesus all your life and eventually die, but even from death you will see Him return and you will know.

“Even so must it be – Amen – so be it”

“I am the Alpha and the Omega the Beginning and the End, says the Lord God, He who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty – the Ruler of All”. (Rev 1:8)

The Beginning and the End, the source of everything – the reason for everything – the reason for me – the beginning of you – the end of us all – the purpose of our existence. THE FINAL REALITY.

The many things are reasonings that occupy our mind and emotions are not reality – every single one of them will cease to exist. Your house will one day be pulled down, your loved ones will die, our face and body will age and only the beauty that shows from within will be left.

Martha was bothered about the physical needs of Jesus and His companions and the Lord very gently corrected her. Martha, do not let your mind and emotions be so totally involved in physically serving me that you ignore me, not the physical me but the reality that I am. (Luke 10:40)

He says the same to us. He must be the centre and source of our being. When we are busy in church or secular work are we “cumbered about with much serving” or do we actively see Christ Jesus being present with us? Jesus said that He would send the Holy Spirit so it is actually He who comforts and guides us. As the Holy Spirit will glorify Jesus – I suspect he comforts and guides us by enabling us to keep our minds and affections fixed on Jesus. (John 16:14)

Are we calmed by His presence or do you, like me, allow circumstances to get the better of you and let other things fill your mind?

Jesus Christ is reality
The Beginning of everything
The source of all things
The end or the beginning of all things
Everything finds its ultimate -
Fulfillment in Him
He is the reason
For you
For me

CHAPTER FOUR

Revelation 1

Revelation 1:9-12

“I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the isle that is called Patmos, 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. What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia.

Unto:

- Ephesus
- Smyrna
- Programos
- Thyatira
- Sardis
- Philadelphia
- Loadicea

and I turned to see the voice that spoke with me, and being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks.”

God is in charge

I, John, your companion, sharer, in the tribulation and kingdom and patient endurance which are in Jesus Christ. (Revelation 1:9)

In Christ Jesus, not in work and effort and study, but in Christ Jesus. These other things may be ways of our wanting to keep in Christ Jesus but the Kingdom is in Christ Jesus.

OK, but do we live in that Kingdom?

This is the problem I have found and, like Paul, “The things I would, I do not, and the things I would not, I do – who shall deliver me from the body of death. I thank God through Jesus Christ that He will.” (Rom 7: 19-25)

The following verses will prove helpful in living in the Kingdom:

“For these who are according to the flesh and controlled by its unholy desires, set their minds on, and pursue those things which gratify the flesh. But those who are according to the Spirit set their minds on, and seek those things which gratify the Holy Spirit within us”. (Rom 8:5)

“Bring every thought/imagination captive to Jesus Christ”. (2 Cor 10:5)

“Renewing of the mind (imagination daily ... “ (Rom 12:2)

“For if you live according to the dictates of the flesh you will surely die, but if through the power of the Holy Spirit you are habitually... making extinct ... the evil deed prompted by the body you shall really and genuinely live forever”. (Rom 8:13)

It seems that the battle is for the mind. The body with its desires for comfort and gratification and emotions of pride and self pity dominate the mind and then the will. We must battle in that area and allow the Holy Spirit to control, guide our thinking so that we deal with these various desires before they take over. The time to deal with a thought or feeling is the moment it appears, or even before it is there. Remember the house that the demons were cast out of

- they came back and found the house clean and decorated, but empty. (Matt 12: 43-45) So they came back in and the person was worse off (Luke 11: 24-26). Perhaps the answer of filling the mind lies in:

“Whatever is true, whatever is worthy of reverence and is honourable and seemly, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely and lovable, whatever is kind and winsome and gracious, if there is any virtue and excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, Think on and weigh and take account of these things - fix your minds on them”(Philippians 4:8-9). “Practice what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and model your way of living on it, and the God of Peace - of untroubled, undisturbed well-being - will be with you”.

So the Kingdom is in Christ, what else does John say in verse 9 -

“I, John, your brother and companion” - this brings to mind the fact that no temptation that we face is something unique to us but that it is common to mankind. Other people face the same temptations.

The great and wonderful truth is that our unshakable brother in facing temptations is Christ Jesus himself. “Tempted in all ways as we are and yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). What an incredible truth for God to whisper in our ear - just when we are about to be overwhelmed with the despair of desires/ thoughts/emotions that we seem unable to cope with. Just when we think that surely nobody has had to bear what we do - comes “I know that temptation - I’ve been there - the enemy tried that one on me too and I told Him to begone and he did” (James 4:7). Resist the devil and he will flee from you, draw near to me and I will draw near to you.

Isn’t it a great comfort and strength to know that Jesus our Lord, as well as other Christians, face the same temptations we do - we are not alone.

It was a great revelation to me to learn that having temptations is not sin. I was walking down a street in a town in mid eastern Queensland and was “over clouded” with a familiar temptation. My first reaction was “Lord, where is our power. I thought that I had given that to you”, and he whispered “It’s not you, it’s the enemy putting it on you, resist it, tell it to be gone and it is not sin”. And it will return. Remember that after Jesus resisted temptation it is recorded “and Satan departed from Him for a season” - he came back. (Luke 4:13)

So, keep resisting, and
You are not alone!

Someone who shares and participates with you in something is there with you – they experience the same things. Maybe their feelings and reactions are not the same as yours but they are true. Are we there with other Christians when they need us? Do we feel for them, pray for them, contact them, love them or share with them.

This does not mean that we are like those who sought to share Job's troubles and only made them worse by moralising and lecturing him (Job 2:11). It means just be there – either in person or if not possible in thought - and pray and feel for them (Job 4).

“Sharer and participator with you in The patient endurance which are in Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:9).

Sharer in what?
Patient endurance
Patience – “abiding under” (Vines Dictionary)
Abiding – living
Living under
Actively living under
Under what?
Under all
That the enemy
Can throw at us.
Whether it be
Active persecution
As for John
Or indifference
Which is what

Most of us
Are faced with
Or maybe
It is simply
Living
And knowing
That God is there
And we are His
No matter what

Vines Dictionary states that patience can be active or passive. Passive, just taking it, or active, turning it into an opportunity to grow more like our Lord Jesus Christ. Which is it - with myself and with you.

Like everything else, this active patient endurance is only found in our union with Christ Jesus. In our deliberately keeping our thoughts turning over on Jesus, on God, on the spirit, on their work and care for us. See a leaf, see the sky, see another person, see God's creation and marvel at it.

As to "endurance" I can do no better than to quote from Oswald Chambers - My utmost for His Highest - Feb 22; "tenacity is more than endurance it is endurance combined with the absolute certainty that what we are looking for is going to transpire. Tenacity is more than hanging on, which may be but the weakness of being too afraid to fall off. Tenacity is the supreme effort of a person refusing to believe that their hero is going to be conquered ... that the things He stood for - law and justice and forgiveness and kindness among people - will not win out in the end; the things that he stands for look like will-o'-the-wisps. Then comes the call to spiritual tenacity, not to hang on and do nothing, but to work deliberately on the certainty that God is not going to be worsted".

In Rev 14:11-12 the fate of these who receive the mark of the beast is used as a warning or a call to God's people to be steadfast, patient and to endure. If we do not hang on, then the alternative of what we let go to is far worse than the circumstance that makes us give up. "Out of the frying pan into the fire" (Job 13:15). Job said "though He slay me yet will I trust Him". The encouragements from God are "they that endure until the end will be saved" (Matt 24:73).

If you fail in the day of trouble your faith is weak” (Matt 16:8) and “Oh you of little faith. Why did you doubt” (Matt 8:26).

We can only find this active patient endurance in Christ Jesus. Not in meditation or philosophies or books or friends. Friends may help us find or stay in Christ Jesus, but we have to be “in” Christ ourselves (Rom 12:2). It is our reborn spirit being renewed daily, it is our physical desires being controlled, it is our reborn spirits that must be in communication with God’s Holy Spirit.

Prov 20:27 - The Spirit of man is the candle of the Lord

John 3:7 - You must be born again

Jesus said that when He returned to Heaven, He would ask the Father who would send the Holy Spirit to be our comforter and guide – also our companion (John 15:26). Do we grieve our companion by what we see, experience, choose?

The scripture is clear that every Christian has God’s Spirit. “If you have not the Spirit of Christ you are none of His” (Rom 8:9), therefore if you have come to God via Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection, you have the Spirit of God. We may or may not have been prayed over for being immersed in God’s Spirit as happened frequently in Acts but you and I do have the Spirit of God and He is our guide and comfort.

If we are out of Christ, first tell Him again that we are His, that we have yielded to Him, make sure of this first. Then persevere, have prayer and bible reading times even if you feel nothing, even if you absorb or remember nothing, even if you have nothing to say, persevere day after day and one day the clouds will clear away and you will see that you are in Christ.

This is the positive living under and not letting go which comes from being absorbed in Christ Jesus.

“I was on the isle called Patmos (banished on account of my witnessing to the Word of God and the testimony - the proof - the evidence - for Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:9b).

Why was John banished? Because he showed others Jesus. Showed them by his life, his words, his attitudes. Showed them by being Jesus’ person. How do we translate this into daily living? Jesus said “the works that I do you shall do also,

and greater works than these will you do because I go to my Father”
(John 14:12).

“By this is my Father glorified that you bring forth much fruit” (John 15:8).
What is fruit? “The fruit of the Spirit is -

love
joy
peace
long suffering (patience)
gentleness (kindness)
goodness
faith
meekness
temperance (self control)”
(Gal 5:22-23 AV, NIV)

As far as I can locate, all the references to fruit apply to growth in character not soul winning! As we allow the Holy Spirit to grow the character of Christ Jesus in us then God is glorified. The fruit of the Spirit is the character of Jesus Christ living in us, part of our own unique person.

In the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, this character was translated into action by His care for people. The concentration in our lives is to be more and more yielded to the Holy Spirit, who will make us more like Jesus the Christ and the caring will flow out.

Why was John banished? Because he showed them Jesus, but by the same thing, he also showed them who they were.

“The light shineth in darkness and the darkness cannot comprehend it” (John 1:5). The normal reaction against something different or threatening is to reject it and try to get rid of it. Thus with John – banished to an island.

But “all things work together for the good of them that love God, who are called according to His purpose” (Rom 8:28). God had a purpose and He needed John

isolated from all distractions so that He could speak to Him in this special dramatic way.

Two things to learn from this:

Showing that we belong to Jesus will mean being thought 'strange' at least, or it may mean active persecution. This may show itself in people avoiding you and talking about you, through to the more active forms of threats to jobs and social isolation and to person.

The most distressing forms of persecution are those that come from other church people or from fellow Christians. Christians who stand for or against certain issues will receive subtle pressure or rejection from others within the church – comments like: strange, to straight, we must be loving (even if it leads to accepting? Sin), one eyed. That touch of coldness in their attitude to you – and so on, are common results and they hurt.

If faced with these things we need to examine, via scripture, our stand and be sure that we are correct. Pray for guidance in how to handle the matter, eg: be still and quiet or continue to actively stand and be counted. Whatever we do we must be true to God.

On the matter of salvation, the scripture tells us not to have any relationship with them, “but though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you then that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. (Gal 1:8, 2 Cor 11:4, Rom 16:17)”

On a slightly different track..

The above comments apply to salvation; however, as for physical sins, Cor 5:9-13 is inarguably specific as to our separation from professing Christians who live in physical sin, (1 Cor 5:11) eg. Illicit sexual intercourse, fornication, wanting what others have (covetous, idolater) that speak evil of others (railers), drunkard or those that take what does not belong to them (extortioner). Paul tells us that we are not to keep company with these people or to show any acceptance of them which would be denoted by our visiting them for a meal. The other side of the attitude is Paul setting out steps that should be taken in trying to win back and correct such a person and as to our own inner attitude towards them, eg. “The log in our own eye” and take care lest we fall into the same trap (Math 18:15, Luke 6:41-42, 1 Cor 10:12).

These instructions relate to our relationship with professing believers.

To summarise: If we take a stand for Christ – ie. live as His person, or if we believe some matter of doctrine must be stood for, we will be persecuted by non Christians and/or Christians and we may need to separate ourselves from

them. This is not a step to be taken lightly and should only be taken on direct instructions from God or if the matter touches on salvation other than through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection.

John was in exile and he could have been very upset and kept his mind on these outward circumstances. He could have said:

“God, why am I here?”

“Why have you put me in this mess?”

“Why did you let this happen to me?”

“I stood for you and now things are worse than before!”

“Look at all these bills - why don't you do something about them?”

“Why, Why, Why, me! Me! Me?”

“Circumstances! Circumstances! Circumstances!”

I suspect that John neither looked at his circumstances nor asked why. I suspect he had trusted his God/lived with his God long enough to leave it to Him and to know (with total certainty) that God was in control and that He would reveal His purpose in due course.

If John's mind had been cluttered with thoughts of his circumstances and of the treatment that he had received, he would not have been open to God speaking to him. And, boy, did God speak to him.

2 Kings 6: 15-17 tells the story of a young man who looked and saw an enemy army surrounding him and feared - “alas, what shall we do?” - it is also of another man Elisha who asked God to “open his eyes that he may see” and the Lord opened his eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire.

Let's be like Jenn and Elisia

Let's see past the immediate

Let's see past the physical

Let God open our eyes

That we may see

REALITY

“If reality were to break through and we should see Him as He is”.. we can gain this as we walk in God’s spirit.

Two final points on Chapter 1 V9. The Amplified Bible reads “companion in tribulations and kingdoms”, be each other’s companions in tribulations – and we can do that by holding them before God. We can also be that by being sensitive to their needs and sorrows. The times in my life that I have really needed a friend, they have not been sensitive enough to be there. In a way, that is good because it makes us depend on Jesus alone. Be open to God’s leading and if He tells you to contact someone – be there. But remember we are also companions in the Kingdom, The Victory, The Joy, The Fullness. Amen – so be it.

The second point is, once again, from the Amp Bible. John was banished on account of “his witnessing to the Word of God and the testimony – the proof, the evidence – for Jesus Christ”. John himself was the evidence for Jesus Christ – and so are you and so am I – “because we believe others will know that I live” (John 14:19).

“I was in the Spirit – rapt in His power – on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a great voice like the calling of a war trumpet, saying I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last. Write promptly what you see” (Revelation 1:10-11a).

“I was in the Spirit
(rapt, rapt in His power)
I had been thinking of God
My mind had been absorbed in Jesus our Lord
I had not been involved in worldly matters or in Church

meetings

for that matter
My whole attention
and effort
had been concentrated
on God
my Salvation
and God spoke”

“Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh? (Gal 3:3)”
Being in the Spirit is contrasted with the flesh and in Verse 5, we read “He therefore that ministered to you the spirit, does he do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”

So, the flesh is the opposite of the spirit and the spirit is given through faith – not words, what we do or how good we are.

To be in the spirit we cannot be in the flesh. We can/must live in the world – which is flesh but we cannot be “of the world”. “God is a Spirit, worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4.24).

This morning was an example of being in the flesh on the Lord’s day. I awoke at 7am with the inclination/desire to get up and start writing – my flesh was not inclined to disturb its comfort and get up, so I spent the next half hour arguing back and forth between my spirit and my flesh – eventually my will resolved and I got up for half an hour and prayed and wrote. Then I went back to bed. If the spirit of God had had control, I would have been straight up and would have stayed up and would have been blessed (made larger).

What of you?
Do you find it hard
to spend time with the Lord Jesus
Does the washing up
the kids
the overtime
the television
the snooze
the friends
the – “I need to relax”
the “I’ll just do this first”
the “as soon as this is finished, I’ll be free”
Get in the way of spending time with the Lord Jesus?

Or –
What of the thoughts
that occupy our minds?
Are they on
the hurts

the offences
the problem
the pleasures
the plans
Church business:-
To the exclusion of God

Or do we -
rehearse the happenings of the day
have conversations in our minds
think on forbidden pleasure
and drive God's Holy Spirit
Away

Are we in the Spirit
Or
Are we in the flesh?

Look at the logical conclusion of living in the flesh. My experience has been that if a little thing in the flesh is allowed to stay, it will little by little grow and will gradually take over more and more of our thinking. Because we have been meditating or turning this thing (anger, frustrations, bitterness, sex, etc.), over in our mind, we will be ready, when the right circumstances are organised, to act without time to stop ourselves. Once acted upon, we are caught and it begins to turn sour. Once the enemy, through the flesh, has caught you, he begins to show his real hatred of you. Suddenly you are a gossip, an adulterer, a glutton, a homosexual, a drunkard, a whinger, a sad and lonely person who hates themselves and finds no pleasure in being "in the flesh". (James 1: 14-15)

Tells us that as "Christ has suffered for us in the flesh we should arm ourselves with the same mind' for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time to the lusts of men, but to the will of God" (1 Peter 4:1,2,8). When we refuse to give in to the desires of the flesh, we are surely suffering in the flesh - refusing to give in to the body's burning, all-consuming lust for whatever, is possibly a worse suffering than the purely physical pain of being whipped or bashed. Making yourself get up, or not lay down, but have a bible study is suffering in the flesh. To turn the television off, to say "No" to someone, to discipline the children, to tell someone the truth about their actions, to not look at those magazines, to not watch that video, to refuse that drink that will be getting close to one too many, to not have that second piece of pavlova, to not eat more than we need. To do our homework, to not say those hurtful words, to not criticise or condemn. These must be included in suffering in the flesh as they all require physical control that is contrary to the desires of our flesh. Are all sin".

"The wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23). We all die but sin leads to separation from God.

“Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed, then when lust hath conceived, it brings forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death” (James 1:14-15). The time to resist/suffer is at the beginning – before we are enticed.

“Take the little foxes that: spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes” (Song of Sol 2.15). We must beware of the little sins for they spoil our growth and beauty as Christians.

“Are you so foolish and so senseless and so silly? Having begun your new life spiritually with the Holy Spirit, are you reaching perfection by dependence on the flesh?” (Gal 3:3).

God never leaves us alone. “He always, with the temptation, provides a way of escape that we may be able to bear it” (1 Cor: 10:13).

Our Lord Jesus said when He returned to heaven he would not leave us alone but would send us a comforter who would be in us. He would live with us forever. He is the Spirit of Truth and will teach us all things. He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement. I personally consider the Spirit’s prime work is shown in “He shall testify of me”. (John 14:16, John 14:26, John 14: 16:7, John 15:26)

The Holy Spirit will tell us of Jesus. He will reveal Jesus to us so that we can reflect Him to others. He will speak quietly in our re-born spirit “the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord” (Prov 20:27).

He is persistent but can be ignored. We can refuse to listen and, although He will not leave us, “that quiet still voice” can be quenched or “offended” (1 Thess 5:19). It’s like you talking to me, if I don’t listen or take any notice, you will stop speaking to me. When I notice the absence of your friendship, I will come to you and say “talk to me please, I am not whole without you”. You may not speak but if I persist you will little by little begin to relate to me. If we do not hear the Comforter speaking to us, we must persist in making time to seek Him. As we hear the first few promptings, we must listen and follow and “little by little, precept upon precept”, He will guide us. (Isaiah 2:8, 10 & 13)

But we must listen and follow or we will quench the Spirit.

A controversial and divisive question among children of the heavenly Father is “when do we receive the Holy Spirit?” Some say at conversion, some at baptism in water (whether as infants or adults) and some say as a separate occurrence resulting from the laying on of hands and prayer.

Whichever view we hold, three things are absolutely inarguable:

1- John said – promised (do I trust Jesus) “I will ask the Father and He will give you another Comforter” the Holy Spirit comes from God (John 14:16).

2- Referring to Jesus. John the Baptist said “that One is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit”. Jesus, not man, is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit (John 1:33).

3- Scripture clearly states “If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His”. All Christians have the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9b).

“I was in the Spirit - rapt in His power - on the Lord’s day” (Rev1:10).

Rapt in His Power

Encircled

Enclosed

Protected

Held

In What?

In Power

Despite external circumstances

We, you and I

Can grow

Till we too can be

Rapt in His power

“On the Lord’s day”

This topic has given me considerable heartache and agony of mind over the years. The two opinions relating to the Sabbath:

- 1- Still being totally the Lord's day and we "should not do our own pleasure" and
- 2- The attitude taken from the verse: "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike, let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord: and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he does not regard it" (Rom 14:5-6).

The two opinions about Sabbath observances seem to be:

- .. that the Old Testament rules and attached promises still stand.
- .. that the freedom of the New Testament allows us to do as our conscience permits on the Lord's day.

The Old Testament instructions were specific in that we were not to do our own pleasure but are to consciously and deliberately seek after God (Isaiah 58:13). The promises God attached to that were magnificent:

"Blessed is the man ... that keepeth the Sabbath" (Isaiah 56:2). He that "Calls the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord. Honourable: and shalt honour him, not doing their own ways, nor finding their own pleasure, not speaking their own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord: and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the Earth (Isaiah 58:13,14). PS - the day that we set aside is between us and God.

Man in his normal way started to add to the requirements of God. He started to transfer the spiritual into definable laws. They transferred the spirit into a law. What was work? He took it down to the most minute level. It, sabbath observance, became an idol. As is his way, man started to worship the thing rather than the creator (Rom 1:25). Sabbath observance became a barrier between man and God.

Jesus on the other hand, who came to fulfil the law, showed the spirit - to help one of God's creatures - man - who was in distress - was not breaking god's Sabbath but was fulfilling it. To show God's concern and love was doing His pleasure on His holy day.

Look at the root purpose of setting aside one day a week. It is so that our relationship to God can grow. So that we may walk with God and so that God may make us large. So that we may delight ourselves in God. It does not have to be Saturday or Sunday but a specific day each week.

It is God wanting us to put aside the physical world and live that one day in the spiritual world. The rules God gave about what not to do on the sabbath are all designed to minimise our contact with the physical world and to leave ourselves free to be open to His Spirit. "I will cause you to ride upon the high places of the earth" (Deut 32:13). It is not that we cease from physical activity or that we do not do this or that but that our spirit becomes the most prominent factor and like Adam and Eve, we "walk with God in the cool of the day" (Gen 3:8). It's not what we don't do but what do do that is important.

"Having begun in the spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh" (Gal 3:3) - it is part of the ongoing battle between flesh and spirit. One day a week, minimise the involvement in the flesh and allow the spirit out to communicate with God.

Do you see what I am getting t? It is not a question of can we go for a picnic with the family but will going on a picnic draw us closer to God or will it prove a sidetrack. It very well may be that spending time with the family and in God's creation will release all the family to see God's love and concern and creative magnificence more clearly - or it may be a "doing of my own pleasure" which will keep my mind on the flesh and away from the spirit - God.

Since these thoughts came to me this morning, I have been most excited as I now have a guideline to judge each activity by. The past few years have been weakened because of indecision and uncertainty as far as sabbath observance is concerned.

Imagine a Sunday with - Sunday School, Church, someone home to lunch, meeting in afternoon, hurried tea, Church at night, young people's meeting after Church, collapse exhausted into bed at 11pm that night.

The day has been filled with the flesh worshipping God but the spirit of me has not been drawn closer to God and refreshed. I have climbed a mountain not "rode on the high places" of the mountains.

<p>Basic Concept of Sabbath - Rest</p>	<p>God's Rules as to what not to do</p>	<p>Us refreshed in God</p>
<p>Spirit uplifted</p>	<p>Flesh subdued</p>	<p>Spirit and Flesh refreshed</p>

The “do nots” are there to make way for the “dos”.
 They are not to become the object - the law.

CHAPTER FIVE

Revelation 1

Revelation 1:10-18

On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword.

His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

Now follows the most startling descriptions of our Lord. The bible has so far pictured Jesus as lamb, shepherd, suffering, dying, submissive, in control of food, drink, weather, King and one or two records of righteous anger. But look at the description which follows “gentle Jesus meek and mild?” NO WAY.

- V10 I heard behind me a great voice
Like the calling of a war trumpet
- V11 Saying,
“I am the Alpha and the Omega,
the First and the Last.
- V12 I saw seven golden lampstands
- V13 and in the midst of the lampstands
one like son of man
clothed with a robe
which reached to His feet
and with a girdle of gold
about His chest.
- V14 His head and His hair
were white like white wool,
and white as snow,
and His eyes flashed
like a flame of fire.
- V15 His feet glowed
like bright burnished bronze
as it is refined in furnace
and His voice was like the sound
of many waters.
- V16 In His right hand
He held seven stars
and from His mouth there came forth
a sharp two-edged sword
and His face
was like the sun
shining in full power
at midday.

- V17 "I am the First and the Last"
- V18 "The ever-lasting One
I am living in the eternity of eternities
I died
But see
I am alive for evermore;
I possess the keys of death and"

What an incredible description. Very little like the Lord we have met so far; and yet? Beneath the Jesus of the gospels there always was power that showed. Why else would the sea, the storms, illness, demons all obey Him. "Gentle Jesus meek and mild" never really existed as we understand the terms. In their time and meaning yes, but He was/is gentle and strong and quiet, not soft and meek and afraid and ineffective.

A hero to look to, could we ask for more than is given in this description?

Perhaps if this description of Jesus were preached more in our churches, there would be fewer back-sliding Christians, fewer people who think that Christianity is a crutch. There would be many more strong Christians who did not take things so lightly and let the world get between them and Jesus our Lord.

I would do well to keep this picture of Jesus before me.

To paraphrase verses 10 to 17:

- V10 A great voice
A voice that drives all others from our hearing
A voice that calls us to ...?
Battle
To war
To right
To persevere
To peace
- V11 I am all that there is
There is nothing else besides me
I am the beginning of everything
and the end of everything
(what conceit - unless it be true?)

- V12 A man?
- V13 Yes – but more
Brilliant to look upon
Majestic to see
- V14 Eyes that see through me, and hurt.
Eyes that burn through pretence -
through self opinion.
- V15 And feet,
Feet that are relentless
Feet that pursue
Feet that do not let up
Powerful bright feet
That destroy
Feet and ways that are pure and holy and undefiled
AND A VOICE THAT OVERSHADOWS ALL
- V16 Words that divide
Words that penetrate
Words that cannot be escaped from
- V17 I am all that there is – the First and the Last
And I have the power of death
“DO NOT BE AFRAID”

“When I saw Him I fell at His feet as if dead but He laid His right hand on me and said “Do not be afraid!” I am the First and the Last and the Ever-living One – I am living in the eternity of eternities. I died, but see, I am alive for ever more: and I possess the keys of death and the realm of the dead. (Romans 1:17)

At the end of His life, John, who followed Jesus so closely and served more faithfully than most of us, saw Jesus. Was he overjoyed? Did he throw himself into Jesus arms? NO - he all but died of terror. He knew that he was undone, he knew that he could not stand before Him. Could not face Him. He knew that he was deserving of death.

In the light of Jesus Christ's presence and power, John knew that he was deserving of external separation from God. Not the friendly warm/cool welcoming light at the end of the tunnel, but the righteous One "before whom no man can stand". "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5)"

But then Jesus touched him - and all was well. Jesus touched him. Even in His power, Jesus our Lord still is tender towards us. Let us not presume upon that and grow careless.

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb 2:3)

Jesus said to John "Do not fear, I was dead but am alive. I have the keys of death. John's reaction seems to have been fear of death as the consequence of facing Jesus. Physical death? John knew the reality of the spiritual world and of life after death, he had faced death many times and it had not produced this reaction. Even then Jesus was arrested, it seems that though John ran away, he did not go very far.

This fear was something greater. It was fear of the real death - the death after physical death. The fear of God saying "Depart from me I never knew you". The fear of being cast into "outer darkness".

What a fearful thing it would be to face Jesus and not belong to Him - how much righteousness would we need if even John could not stand.

Jesus said to John "Do not fear". I am in control of death. I have been through it. I have overcome physical death and My Father turned His face from Me. I descended into Hell and My Father raised Me for Hell could not hold Me. I have been through it, I have overcome it, you belong to Me. You do not need to fear death, for you will not be separated from Me by death. (Romans 1:17)

Focus on Jesus not on ourselves, we see twelve references to Jesus but only three to ourselves in this reading.

Facing Jesus in His power brings fear, fear of death because we have nothing to defend ourselves with or to present as an offering. Only in our Lord's words "do not fear", are we secure.

He lays His right hand on us also - do not fear death or aloneness.

“I died but ... I am alive forever more”. Notice that life comes through death. We must die physically to inherit eternal life (unless the Lord decrees otherwise and returns first. (Romans 1:18)

We must also die to ourselves or give up ourselves to be given back ourselves in life and freedom and fullness. We must give up our right to ourselves and yield our lives to God. He will return our lives to us, purified and full in Christ Jesus. But we must give them up first.

“I give my life to you as a living sacrifice Holy and acceptable to God” (Rom 12:1)

and, “I appeal to you therefore, brethren, in view of all the mercies of God, to make a decisive dedication of our bodies – presenting all our members and faculties – as a living sacrifice, holy (devoted, consecrated) and well pleasing to God, which is our reasonable (rational, intelligent) service and spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, ... but be changed by the entire renewal of our mind – by its new ideals and attitude – so that we may prove for ourselves what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God”. (Rom 12:1-2)

Jesus said to Nicodemus “You must be born again unless a person is born of water and the spirit, they cannot see the Kingdom of God”. Born as flesh – reborn in the spirit – a new spirit. We are spirit, soul and body, our spirit is reborn, our soul/mind is renewed daily and our body is subdued moment by moment. (John 3:3-8)

When God created Adam and Eve, he gave them one thing that they were not to do – one thing only to show that they choose Him above all things and they chose themselves. Eve chose the flesh and the soul “the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was delightful to look at and a tree to be desired to make one wise. She made a choice and acted. (Gen 3:6)

Adam chose Eve rather than God for he knew that if he did not go along with her he would lose her – for she would be to death and he would be to life. “she gave some also to her husband, and he ate”.

God is in charge

It is a bit like the incident in “Lord of the Rings” where the Elf chose to become human and to give up immortality to marry the human she loved. It sounds all romantic in a novel but, in reality, Adam put Eve before God – that is the most deadly of sins. “You shall have no other Gods before me” is the first commandment and it is the first sin that Adam committed. (Exodus 34:14)

We have a choice – Jesus Christ the saviour or ourselves and the enemy.

CHAPTER SIX

Revelation 1

Revelation 1:19-20

“Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter: the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks.

The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which you saw are the seven churches.”

John is told to write:

- What he has seen.
- The things which God is going to reveal to him, what reality really is. It is certainly very different to the reality as portrayed on the television and other media outlets.
- The things which shall be hereafter, not maybe, or if you don't change your ways this will happen, but SHALL BE. God always gives the option of repentance but He knows the future. It is all the present to Him. He knows that some will repent and that many will not. Believers will draw comfort from the fact that God is in control; that He has decreed that these things will happen. As we see the things to be spoken of beginning to happen, eg. The one world money system, the linking up of banks and business and wages in cashless transactions, we need to see that God has said it would happen. We need to understand that it is working towards each of us being branded with the devil's numbering system and not being able to buy or sell unless we have that number (Rev 13: 16-18). We must draw strength and comfort from knowing that God is not being taken by surprise. We must fight against the evil as God directs us, yet trust God and know that it is one of the steps in the path of Jesus coming back and the recreation of the world. Prior to His crucifixion, Jesus said "These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended ... when the time shall come, you must remember that I told you of them" (John 16: 1-4).

"... The seven stars which you saw on my right hand and the seven lampstands of gold, the seven stars are the seven angels of the seven assemblies and the seven lampstands are the seven churches" (Revelation 1:20).

Vines Dictionary 1035:

Seven – the complete number, so it is to all the churches of all time not just those nominated.

The Angels – how much there is that I don't know about angels! We are told that they are ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation (us). They are often messengers from God – there are also fallen angels who are servants of the enemy. (Heb 1:14, Numb 22:31, Jude 6)

But note that the angels of the churches are in Jesus' right hand! The hand of power.

The Churches - blessed, wonderful, magnificent, frightening? News to the churches - JESUS WALKS AMONGST THE CHURCHES (Revelation 1:13). Jesus walks in our churches - mine and yours. Do you really know that He is there? Whether it is God in Jesus Christ or in the Holy Spirit matters little. What matters is do we know that He is there and do we act accordingly?

Do we know that Jesus walks amongst the churches.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Revelation 2

Revelation 2:1-7

“Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; these things says he that holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know your works, and your labour, and your patience, and how you can not bear them which are evil; and you have tried them who say they are apostles, and are not, and have found them liars; and have borne, and have patience, and for my name’s sake have laboured, and have not fainted.

Nevertheless, I have somewhat against you, because you have left your first love. Remember therefore from whence you are fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I will come unto you quickly, and will remove your candlestick out of his (it’s - NIV) place, except you repent.

But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate. He that has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says unto the churches; to him that overcomes will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God”.

“To the angel (messenger) of the assembly (churches) in Ephesus write (Rev 2:1-7).

Does each assembly have a particular angel? There are many references in the bible to the place angels play in the spiritual battle, the three most striking to me being:

1. “Angels are ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation” (Heb1:14).
2. The story of an angel (possibly Gabriel) being sent to answer Daniel’s prayers but being delayed by the evil angels and needing the help of another angel, Michael, to enable him to get through. (Daniel 10:10-14)
3. Our Lord’s saying that the children’s angels “do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven”. (Matthew 18:10)

We have the Holy Spirit to guide us but if these verses are to be taken literally, God has appointed a particular angel to each assembly. The enemy is sure to have done the same thing. We are nowhere in scripture given permission to look to angels or to worship them – the opposite is true. “though .. an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Gal 1:8).

God’s care of us is wonderous – He sent the angels to help in the fight. We need to recognise that there are spiritual forces fighting over our assembly – it’s not just those other difficult people that hassle us.

“These are the words of Him who holds the seven stars (The Angels) in His right hand”. (Rev 1:20)

The right hand is traditionally the hand of power.

The angels are in God’s presence – yet Paul states very clearly (Gal 1:8) that even if an angel of God were to present any other gospel than the one he preached – salvation only through Christ Jesus and His finished work (Acts 4:12) – then they were to be accursed. There are also miriads of fallen and evil angels (Job 4:18) – one third of all the angels disobeyed God and went with Lucifer (Matthew 25:41). All things have to be weighed against the bible’s revelation of Jesus Christ (2 Pet 2:4) – all must acknowledge that He is Lord (Jude 6) and that Jesus Christ (Rev 12:9) is come in the flesh. Satan can transform himself into an “angel of light” so we must take great care not to judge by external appearance or circumstances (John 4:1-2, 2 Cor 11:14).

“Who goes about among the seven golden lampstands (which are the seven churches)” (Revelation 2:1)

Who goes?

“Him who holds ... “ (Revelation 2:1)

“One like a son of man” (Revelation 1:13,16)

Jesus our Lord – the Son of man

Where does he walk?

“Among the seven golden lampstands (the seven churches)”.

Jesus our Lord walks among our churches. We are not always conscious of this – we sometimes are so aware of the problems, the people who hurt, the organisations, the faults of others, our own hurt, the needs, the desires, that we are not totally aware that Jesus Himself walks among us. This awareness or consciousness will change us and bring peace.

When Peter looked at the waves, he began to sink, (Matt 14:24-33) but when he had his eyes looking straight to Jesus, he could walk through on the waves – so with the problems in our churches (our lives). Look to Jesus, not to the troubles. Always keep him in our minds and growing more like Him as our goal. Always trust that if we are walking with Him, we need not fear.

“I know your industry and activities, laborious toil and trouble, and your patient endurance” (Revelation 2:2).

When a friend or spouse lives with us they know part of our lives, part of our activities but they normally do not know all our activities and troubles. Jesus our Lord knows all our sorrows, our joys, our troubles, our victories – he knows.

This is a tremendous comfort, even when He knows the wrong thoughts and feelings it is still a marvellous thing because there is one person who knows us totally, one person that we do not have to pretend with, one person who loves us totally despite the fact that he knows every hidden fault, and tells us strongly that He disapproves – how comforting to have a friend like that.

This church worked hard to reach others with the good news of Jesus, the equivalent modern church would have Sunday Schools, men’s and women’s meetings, Outreach, Young People, senior citizens, community work and prayer meetings and bible studies.

They have trouble and instead of complaining, they patiently endure. This attitude to trouble is to persevere, to be steadfast, to keep on going. Are we that

faithful or do we give up when we meet opposition? Do we throw it in when others in the church fail to appreciate what we are doing? Do our feelings get hurt because only Jesus knows what we are doing? Verse 3 shows that they were also remaining faithful under active persecution.

“I know you are enduring patiently and are bearing up for My name’s sake, and you have not grown weary” (Revelation 2:3).

We may also face active persecution ranging from:

- work or school or neighbours – keeping out of your way, joking about you, playing nasty tricks on you, criticising you harshly when you make a slip and so on.
- in your home – you may live with non Christians or with nominal Christians who make sure that they interrupt you whenever you try to be alone with God, or who always plan something else for Sunday church times.
- in your church – there are those who think you “strange” or “too extreme” or “not loving” when you stand strong on some point or they think that you consider yourself to spiritual and look down on them when you try to encourage them - the answer is to love and grow closer to Christ Jesus.

There are those in the church who like power. These type of people are in all churches and they do an immense amount of damage (3 John 9). As do those who will not obey God’s instructions to submit to those in authority over them (Romans 13:1). Other churches – I have had experience of one church trying to destroy the outreach of another simply because “they weren’t their denomination”.

God works in and through us but does not force us or others (why give Adam and Eve a choice (Genesis 2&3) – He could have forced them to remain innocent – He wants us to want Him). These opportunities can make God redirect His way of achieving His ends. We need to see God always before us, to persevere and to be sensitive to redirection with God. Don’t give up but don’t hang on to something when God says “Let’s do this another way” or “This stage is complete”.

“I know ... how you cannot tolerate wicked men and have tested and critically appraised those who call themselves apostles (special messengers or Christ) and yet are not, and have found them to be impostors ... “ (Revelation 2:2)

First Point:

Not all who name the name of Christ Jesus belong to Him, not all who call themselves ministers of Christ are. Jesus even says that some who do miracles and cast out demons in His name do not belong to Him. The name of Jesus is powerful but not all those who use it are His. (Matt 7:23)

Second Point:

If someone comes to your fellowship and claims to bring a message from Jesus, how do you know it is from God? How do you test and critically appraise without being merely critical and without speaking against God's anointed person for that place?

We need to stay within what the bible tells us:

Paul writes that "though we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal 1:8) and verse 9 repeats the warning. The first thing to check out is their gospel. OK - what is "the gospel"?

In the same letter, Paul goes on to warn of those who would add other things to "faith in Jesus Christ" (Gal 2:16-21) "We know that a man is... in right standing with God, not by works of law but (only) through the (absolute) reliance on... and trust in Jesus the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One... for we cannot be justified by any observance of (the rituals of) the Law (given by Moses) because by keeping legal rituals and by works no human being can ever be... put in right standing with God".

"But I fear, least by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ".
(2 Cor 11:3)

The first test is carefully search out their basic beliefs, is it Christ's death and resurrection alone that puts us right with God, or is there something else added?

Did you notice what I just did? The verses I quoted spoke of faith in Jesus Christ but did not say in his death! So am I adding to the gospel or is Christ Jesus' death what our faith in Jesus is in? We need bible backing for every point, otherwise I will be guilty of taking part of scripture and drawing my own conclusions.

“You were slain and with your blood you purchased us unto God from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev 5:9).

“without the shedding of blood there is neither release from sin and its guilt nor the remission of the due and merited punishment for sins” (Heb 9:22).

“He has once for all ... appeared to put away and abolish sin by His sacrificed (of Himself)” (Heb 9:26).

“Christ having been offered to take upon Himself and bear as a burden the sins of many once for all ...” (Heb 9:28).

There are many more verses - look up in a concordance the word “blood” to find some of them.

There are other verses that talk of baptism and confessing with the mouth of Jesus but the above verses show that faith in Jesus’ death and resurrection is the essence of our salvation. (Heb 11)

“If Christ has not been raised from the dead, we are still in our sins and are the most foolish of people” (1 Cor 15:14-19).

I have quoted scripture and not my own thoughts as this point is not open to any interpretation or modification. It is the one absolute fact that Christianity is based upon. Any teaching that varies from this is not Christian.

This salvation is available to all - “let him that is thirsty - come” (Rev 22:17).

“If anyone is thirsty, let them come” (John 7:37).

and in our Lord’s own words “come unto me all ye that labour” (Math 11:28).

(The discussion on free will and predestination has no bearing on this point - the Lord’s words are very clear - the point of difference is under what conditions people will come - of their own free will or does God overrule and bring those that He chooses?).

To summarise - the first point to check out is the person’s belief regarding salvation.

Paul gives instructions to test the spirit that is in a person:

“Beloved, do not put faith in every spirit, but prove (test) the spirits to discover whether they proceed from God, for many false prophets have gone forth into the world. By this you may know the Spirit of God - every spirit which acknowledges the fact that Jesus Christ, the Messiah, actually has become man and has come in the flesh is of God - has God for its source. And every spirit which does not acknowledge and confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh but would disunite Him is not of God. This non confession is the spirit of antichrist”. (1 John 4:1-3)

Note the assumption that we all have connections with the spirit world - we all have a spirit within us. The way the above verse is made indicates that it is an actual spirit and not an attitude. It could be our own spirit born of God or corrupted by the enemy, or it could be an outside spirit.

The Lord Jesus “did not trust Himself to them for He knew all men” (John 2:24). He knows what is inside all of us. There is a gift of God brought to us through the Holy Spirit - ‘discernment of spirits’ (1 Cor 12:10).

This is a gift that we all need and in some degree it is available to each of us. There is also the fact that “the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord” (Prov 20:27) and the Lord can guide each of us if we will learn to listen. Also “if anyone lack wisdom let him ask of God who gives to all men liberally” (James 1:5).

When we consider the many cases where Jesus dealt with evil spirits, we gain guidance as to how to deal with them:

1. He addressed them directly, He spoke to the spirit not to the person (look up the word “spirit” in the concordance).
2. He spoke, knowing the reality of the spiritual world. “we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers in the heavenly sphere” (Eph 6:12).
3. He spoke, knowing that He had authority or power over them - and they knew it too. “In my name you shall cast out demons” (Matt 10:1&8, Matt 13:34, Matt 28:18-19). If we are in Him we have that authority.
4. As far as I can see, He only dealt with people who came to Him. He did not go out looking for people who were afflicted but dealt with those who came to Him themselves or who were brought by others who had legitimate authority over the person, eg. parents with afflicted children. (Mat 7:25)

On a personal note, I have learned that like a baby learning to walk, we have to learn to listen to God's spirit as He teaches us and speaks to us and warns us.

We learn by doing - listen and obey. If we want to hear God's voice, we must obey in the thing that He is telling us now. Learn to practice the gift of discernment when deciding what to let into ourselves - songs, books, people and especially with television shows and films.

"I know you are enduring patiently and are bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not ... grown weary". (Revelation 2:3)

Grown weary?

Grown weary of following the Lord?

Grown weary of believing in God?

Grown weary of resisting temptation?

Grown weary of praying and seeing no answer?

Grown weary of all the effort and work?

and no results

Grown weary!

"Bearing up for my name's sake .."

When Peter took his eyes off Jesus and looked at the troubles around him, he began to sink. (Matt 14:30)

When we keep our eyes on Jesus and are being directed by Him we will not grow weary. If we are in God's will but are looking at the troubles or the effort or the time or the arrangements or the results, we will grow weary. We must look - keep our mind, our thoughts on Jesus. We must deliberately live in the knowledge that Jesus is working through us and that our aim is to be channels for Him - not to be careful of what Mr or Mrs So and So will say, think or feel. That is between them and Jesus, we must answer to Him for the way we behave.

For Jesus name

For Him

“For through Him and to Him and by Him are all things” (Rom 11:36).

“He planned ... for the climax of the ages to unify all things ... in Christ (Eph 1:10).

(Revelation 2:3) “enduring patiently”: means to abide under, to bear up, to wait. Not simply enduring without hope but living, abiding in Jesus in the midst of trouble.

(Revelation 2:4) “But I have this one charge to make against you, that you have left the love that you had at first – you have deserted me, your first love”.

Consider the implications very carefully – these people were praised for works, for keeping their faith in Jesus but the love motive had faded. Have you ever been in a congregation where the people are busy and the program is full but something is missing. The things, the Sunday School, the Crèche, the Choir, the Outreach, the Young People, the boys and girls brigade, the Seniors Club, have taken over, have filled the minds and emotions of the people. They are still loving and caring to each other and to outsiders but “something” is missing. They no longer do things out of pure love for Jesus Christ.

It is a fantastic trick of our enemy to get us so busy and so tied up with worthwhile things, that Jesus himself takes a backward place.

“But they must be done” you say

“Seek you first the Kingdom of God” Jesus says (Matt 6:33)

“But people need to see you care, see you through us” you cry

Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you” replies Jesus our Lord.

If they do not correct this situation, the Lord says that He “will remove their lampstand from its place” (5b). the lampstand is the church (Ch 1:20).

Both in marriage and in our marriage to Jesus, if the love is not regained, the marriage will gradually become colder and colder and will eventually end in divorce. The couple may continue to “do” their bit but eventually there will be nothing left.

If we, as Christians, do not maintain our love for Christ – as the basis of our being – we will eventually grow cold and drift and fall or, worse, become “religious” like the scribes and the Pharisees of Jesus’ generation.

“We love Him because He first loved us”!! (John 4:19) and our love should grow. If our love has grown a bit stale, turn this verse over in your mind – think of how much God loves us individually and we will find our love for Him responding and growing.

An illustration (may be a reality?)
a couple
newly married
and nothing was a problem
she found that folding his singlet was a delight
and the task brought a smile to her face for they reminded her
of him
and him
well, when she left her shoes in the middle of the floor
he picked them up and tenderly put them away
for they reminded him of her beautiful feet
and the years passed
and work and mortgage and babies and tiredness came
she still puts his singlets away
but it has become another job to be done
and “why can’t he wear them twice”
and him –
her shoes are kicked out of the way
so that he doesn’t have to step over them.

They still love each other
and they still care
and still do the necessary things
but not as before
and if they don’t do something about it
the marriage could end in divorce

This is the stand of Rev 2:2-5

What does Jesus say to do about it?

Verse 5 - Remember

- Repent

- Do

“Remember then from what heights they have fallen.

Repent – change the inner man to meet God’s will and do the works we did previously when first we knew the Lord”.

Remember the high points. When you were close to Jesus, remember how excited you were at first. How He filled your thoughts and emotions, how you delighted to be in His company.

Even if your initial love for the Lord was shallow, then remembering reminds us of the fact that love should grow.

Repent, desire to love Him, be overtaken with a desire to love Him again. Fill your prayers and tears with desire to love Him.

Do what?

Do the works that you did at the beginning

Praise the Lord

Rejoice in Him (Eph 4: 14-15)

Grow more like Him (the fruit of the Spirit) (Gal 5:22)

Tell others of Him

Isn’t that the difference?

What does a new disciple do

What does a man or woman do when first in love

Tell others!

We must go back to – not doing this or that, but spreading the Gospel.

There are many gifts, including help and administration, but we are all told “Go you into the world and spread the Gospel” (Math 28).

“Yet you have this in your favour ... you detest the works of the Nicolactans ... which I myself detest” (Revelation 2:8). It is good and right to detest what God detests:

To love what God loves

To hate what He hates

We are not told what these people did but we are told that God detested their works. Not the people but the works themselves.

We must not confuse care for people and disapproval of their works. God did not, neither must we. If we mix the two together, we can eventually be seen to be weak and without standards. We must stand strong on the standard God has shown in the Bible (not on church traditions – Jesus condemned this very strongly) but still care for the person.

“God is light and in Him is no darkness at all”. (1 Jn 1:5)

(Revelation 2:7a)

“He who is able to hear, let him listen to and give heed to what the spirit says to the assemblies”.

“Able to hear”. Have you ever wondered why people do not understand - why they are not interested. Have you ever wondered why you didn't believe years before you did or when you finally grasp some truth of scripture, do you shake your head and wonder why you never saw it before?

The Spirit of God needs to open our ears so that we may hear. If we do not understand a particular thing, we need to pray that God will open our understanding.

(Revelation 2:7b)

“To him who overcomes (is victorious), I will grant to eat of the fruit of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God”.

In these seven messages, the promise of reward matches the description of Jesus and the particular problem faced by that Church.

In Ephesus, Jesus described Himself as He who holds the messengers and is among the churches – He knows.

God is in charge

He

- states the problem as loss of first love so that work is for
Jesus
and not Jesus flowing through the love.

- promises real life

This church was enduring and working hard but Jesus who walks amongst us knows our motives. They must not be out of anything but love for Christ. If we repent and return to our first love, we will find what we are seeking – real life. The works will not give it to us. Love for Jesus will result in His giving us Life – in its fullest.

“I, (Jesus) am come that you might have life and have it in its fullest”
(John 10:10).

But we have to “overcome”

Do you want life?

We will find it in love for Jesus Christ our Lord

CHAPTER EIGHT

Revelation 2

Revelation 2:8-11

“To the Angel of the Church in Smyrna write: These things says the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive:

I know your works, and tribulations, and poverty. (but you are rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not. But are they synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which you shall suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days; be you faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life. He that has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says unto the churches; he that overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death”.

Smyrna

“And to the angel, messenger, of the assembly in Smyrna write. These are the words of the First and the Last, who died and came to life again”. (Revelation 2:8)

Once again the message is to a messenger.

We need each other. God gives each part of the body a part to play, the body needs each part. The message is to the whole church, not just to a few backsliden members. One member falls all members suffer. (1 Cor 12:11)

Jesus describes Himself in two ways:

1. the first or beginning
the last or end
He is the most important person, the centre point of the universe.

Is he ..

The centre point of our lives? My life?
2. In our thoughts -

is He first thought - “what would Jesus do?”. Jesus will not contradict what he said on earth.
is He the final consideration - “This is what He would do”
or am I believing what I want to believe?

I find that my feelings,
my reactions, come first
then I have to make myself stop
and say
“Lord “

As I persevere in bringing
every thought captive to Jesus
even if it is after the event
he will more and more become
first reaction
first decision

“Who died and came to life again?” (Revelation 2:8b)

This section has tremendous importance:

- it shows that death is not the end
- it shows that Jesus has conquered death
- it shows that even if we must lose our lives for Jesus' name, we have not lost.

During His life, Jesus raised others to life and now God has given Him back His life (“The power that raised Christ from the dead is at work in you”).

(Eph1:19-20)

This difference in attitude to death is crucial to the understanding of much of what is revealed of the future in Revelation.

“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His Saints” (Ps. 116:15).

God cares and knows each of our lives and our deaths are a great sadness to Him because His original plan for each of us was that we would not die. God is so conscious of death in our world that He knows when even the most insignificant thing dies “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing and yet your Heavenly Father knows when one of them falls to the ground” (Matt 10:29).

However, it is not, to God, the final defeat. He allows His people to be killed, to face great hardship and to eventually die. He sees time differently and He sees the end result. Because death is to us a cutting off and we do not see the deceased person again, it seems to be so final, so irreversible, but God sees the whole continuance. When we die, we leave all those we love but they will catch up with us in a few years' time. Love can still exist even when we are separated for a weekend – we know that we still see them again - So it is with death. We can be aware of the memory of those who have died and we can smile?

As we go through Revelation we shall see God's people suffer and die and God does not reach out to stop it – He receives them home to be with Him and says “They that endure to the end will be saved” (Matt 24:13).

Saved!
But you are dead
What a joke
The world says

But the joke is on you
God quietly replies

Welcome home
Good and faithful child

“Who died and came to life again??!!!” (Revelation 2:8)

“I know your afflictions and distress and pressing trouble, and your poverty (but you are rich) and how you are abused and reviled and slandered by those who say they are Jesus and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear nothing that you are about to suffer. Dismiss your dread and your fears! Behold, the devil is indeed about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be proven ... and for ten days you will have affliction. Be loyal, faithful unto death ... and I will give you a crown of life”. (Revelation 2:9-10)

Can't you hear the tenderness in the Lord's voice,
The soft strength
The gentleness
The strength
The love

He is talking to His children who are about to go through a very bad physical time. He could stop it but He is going to let it happen. His love is there and will be with them. He has been through it.

What did the devil working through the religious leaders do to Him?
(John 18:19)

Abused
Slandered
Imprisoned
Killed

They were to go through the same ordeal as the Lord.
“Dismiss your dread and your fears!”
You are in control
Dismiss
It is like dismissing an unprofitable servant.
Bid fear begone and welcome in the Holy Spirit
Jesus has been true
He is with us

A few other points to note:

It was from the religious people, the church people, that persecution was to come. (Revelation 2:9) The people that you would expect to support you and be glad are the very ones who were going to oppose you. No, not you, but the Lord Jesus – He identifies so closely with His people that to hurt His people is to hurt Him (remember Saul on the road to Damascus “Saul, Saul who do you persecute Me – Saul the persecuting Christians). (Acts 9:4)

It is a fearful thing that genuine church people as well as simply religious people can find themselves working against the Lord.

At one time, we started a children’s outreach in a small town. The town, since its foundations, was dominated by one Christian group. We were not of that group even though we did send our children to their school. A group of people in that church worked against us, they had us put out of the hall we were in, spread stories about us and our numbers went from 40 to close down. The spiritual conflict that went on made every meeting a strain instead of a pleasure. The Lord achieved His will through other means – we were directed to scripture teaching in the public school and taught all the 4, 5 & 6 class children. The church people will have to answer to the Lord – I pray they see and repent first.

They were warned that they would face death and some would even die. They were not promised prosperity and outward peace but they were promised real life, told not to dread – the opposite to dread would be an inner calm. In V11, they were also promised no injury in the second or real death – separation from God. (Revelation 2:10)

The persecution came via people, but its source was the devil. Always see through the face to face situations to the real cause of it. It is not the people – they are blind – behind them is our real enemy. WE FIGHT HIM – not the people. Use spiritual weapons and endure. “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers” (Eph 6:12) in the spirit’s name. (Revelation 2:10)

God has given us weapons – many of them. The following groups are the most noticeable examples.

1. to protect our thoughts – salvation – I am clean in Jesus (Eph 6:13-17)
- to protect our feelings – righteousness – I am right in Jesus
- to protect our modesty – truth of God
- to protect our coming and going – gospel of peace
- to protect us totally – faith
- to fight with – the word of God – (written and whispered to our spirit – “the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord”) – praying at all times in the spirit being in communication with God (Prov 20:27)

2. When called before judges and rulers take no account of what you will say, etc. (Luke 13:8-9), for the Spirit will tell you at that moment what you will say. Trusting God to lead us is a weapon. "If anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all men liberally and upbraideth not. God does not say - "stupid man". (James 1:5)

3. The gifts of the Spirit have been given to the Christian body to enable it to grow strong and stay strong and fight.
 - power to speak a message of wisdom (1 Cor 12:8-10)
 - power to express a word of knowledge and understanding
 - wonder working faith
 - extraordinary powers of healing
 - working of miracles
 - prophetic insight - gift of interpreting the divine will
 - ability to distinguish between the utterances of true spirits and false ones
 - various kinds of unknown tongues
 - ability to interpret such tongues
 - apostles - special messengers (Eph 4:11)
 - prophets - inspired preachers and expounders
 - evangelists - travelling preachers of the gospel
 - pastors - shepherds of His people
 - teachers
 - prophecy (Rom 12:6-8)
 - practical service
 - teaching
 - encouraging and exhorting
 - contributing
 - giving aid and superintending
 - acts of mercy

All these weapons are there - we have to use them to attack, defend and persevere.

These three lists all start or end with the instruction that we are all individual, different parts of the same body and that the Holy Spirit gives the gifts as He chooses. (Rev 12:4, 1 Cor 12:11) The reason is "His intention was the perfecting and the full equipping of the saints (His consecrated people), (Eph 4:12:15) that they should do the work of ministering toward building up Christ's body (the church) that it might develop until we all attain oneness in the faith and in the comprehension of the full and accurate knowledge of the Son of God ... so then, we may no longer be children, tossed to and from between chance gusts of

teaching and wavering with every changing wind of doctrine .. rather - let our lives lovingly express truth in all things - speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly. Enfolded in love, let us grow up in every way and in all things into Him, who is the Head, even Christ, the Messiah, The Anointed One.”

4. The fourth type of weapon given to us is the fruit or result of the Holy Spirit living within us. The Holy Spirit is present within each Christian but the fruit of His presence needs to grow as we yield to God’s Holy Spirit at work within us. The fruit of the spirit is the character of Jesus Christ. The fruit that we bear is the character of Jesus Christ growing and showing in our lives. This is witness.

“I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever lives in Me and I in him bears abundant fruit. However ... cut off from vital union with me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

“The fruit of the Holy Spirit ... is (Gal 5: 22-23)

“love - which endures long, is patient and kind; love never is envious, nor boils over with jealousy; is not boastful, does not display itself haughtily, is not conceited, is not rude, does not act unbecomingly, does not insist on its own way, is not self-seeking, is not touchy, fretful or resentful; takes no account of the evil done to it, does not rejoice at injustice and unrighteousness, but rejoices when right and truth prevail; it bears up under anything that comes; is ever ready to believe the best of every person, its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances and it endures everything without weakening, love never fails - never fades out or becomes obsolete or comes to an end!” (1 Cor 13: 4-8)

WHAT A WEAPON!!

could it ever be defeated
surely this was the weapon that Jesus used
to defeat the enemy

Was it not God’s love for us
for you
for me
that sent Jesus

“for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

God's love for us
defeated Satan
and rescued me
and made me whole

I can use this love that the Holy Spirit has put in me to fight and win.

John gives a very practical application. He tells us that "perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18) and that if we fear, we have not grown to maturity. It also tells us that "we love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

If we are fearful or nervous about any situations, we have a weapon that God has given us to use against this fear that the enemy has put within us. If we direct our thoughts to how much God loves us, our love for Him will grow. This is a promise of God. "We love Him because He first loved us" and "perfect love casts out fear". If we concentrate on God's love for us, the love that will grow in us will be perfect too. This love will enable us to defeat all the fear and nervousness that will come against us.

- Joy - "Jesus was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows" (Gal 5:22) and "A merry heart doth good like a medicine" (Prov 17:22).
- peace - inward (Gal 5:22)
- patience - an even temper
- kindness - being thoughtful about little things will lift other people up
- goodness - doing things that God does
- faithfulness - being there, being consistent, doing what we say
- gentleness - not weakness, gentle is steady and supportive, a touch on the shoulder, a smile
- self control - you being in control under God

What an arsenal of weapons, surely a weapon for every occasion. Use them to fight temptation and to attack the enemy and bring people into God's Kingdom.

Note that there is no condemnation of this church, just a loving Father strengthening and encouraging the children He loves. In this situation you do not tell your children their faults, you love them. Loving strength in the midst of a bad time with worse to come.

"I will give you a crown of life" and "you shall not be hurt by a second death" (Revelation 2:10-11). Physical death is not the end and Jesus promises that if we hold our faith in Him till the end, we will gain real life. We personally may not have to face active persecution for Jesus, however, the humdrum day to day life

and the busyness of living can be more destructive than active persecution.

To overcome, see Jesus Christ in everything.

“To all in the name of the Lord Jesus” – even the washing up or the repetitive job at work. “Do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men”. (Col 3:17, 23)

The message again ends with that “He who overcomes”. God is not going to wave a magic wand – He has given us all we need to win and He expects us to fight and win. Death is not losing. This message makes that clear. Staying faithful to Jesus is winning – that takes ‘guts’. (Revelation 2:11)

CHAPTER NINE

Revelation 2

Revelation 2:12-17

“and unto the Angel of the Church is Pergamos write:

These things saith he which has the sharp sword with two edges; I know your works, and where you dwell, even where Satan’s seat is; ad you hold fast my name, and have not denied my faith, even in those days when Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwells.

But I have a few things against you, because you have there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a tumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication, so have you also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which think I hate.

Repent: or else I will come unto you quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

He that has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says unto the churches; to him that overcomes will I give to eat of the hidden manna (food), and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows saving he that receives it.

Pergamos

“Then go unto the angel of the assembly in Pergamos write: These are the words of Him who has and wields the sharp two-edged sword”. (Revelation 2:12)

“These are the words” – words, that Jesus communicates to us with – Jesus is “the living word” (John 1: 1-5). His life is a message to us, lived out in clear uncluttered, unambiguous language. None has any excuse for not hearing or understanding. Our church, the one we attend, has no excuse for saying that Jesus does not communicate to them. They cannot say “Oh well, it’s okay for those 7 churches (in Revelation); they received a clear message from Jesus – if Jesus spoke that plainly to us, we would respond, we would not fail”.

But Jesus has spoken – to you, to me, to our church. His life is very loud language. He is the Living Word, the Living Message.

“The sword of the Spirit which is the word of God”. I had always seen this to be the written word but the Spirit whispered in my heart “it is also the life and death and resurrection of your Lord”. (Eph 6:17)

Surely His life in comparison to ours, divides or shows up the conflicts between the various parts of our being. “the word is God is ... sharper than any two-edged sword, dividing asunder the soul and spirit ... and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart ... all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. (Heb 4:12)

It is clear that a sword is used for killing and separating and that Jesus not only has it but He uses it. It is sharp and it is double-edged so that it cuts with the back stroke as well as the forward stroke. Jesus means business and the time has come.

Jesus means business with the churches that we attend. We need to compare our church with His life and attitudes and cut away whatever does not conform.

“I know where you live” (Revelation 2: 12)

Take comfort from this assurance
No matter how bad it is
Jesus knows
No matter how lonely - nobody calls
But Jesus knows where we live

“a place where Satan sits enthroned. Yet you re clinging to ... My name”.

Jesus knows where we live.

You in return must hang on to belief in Him
No matter what the situation
No matter what the opposition
No matter what the persecution
Whether it be subtle or outright
Never ever deny Jesus

When at work and the others are laughing or ridiculing another
Christian
- do not join the laughter - don't weakly smile - walk away if we must
but do not, by our silence, deny the Lord Jesus.

That media show that denigrates the standards that Jesus taught, by
watching it, I am partaking of it and by my action of partaking in it,
I am denying Christ Jesus' name or not carrying God's name.

How do you behave at school? Do your actions and expressions,
the people you mix with, the things you laugh at, your silences, not
attending the school bible study - do you deny Jesus' name?

These people were in a very evil situation surrounded by every type of
“pleasure”: religious, physical and intellectual and they did not deny
Jesus. Even when one of their number was killed.

They clung to Jesus' name
clung
to hang on
the rope
that is all that is between
us
and the deep chasm
We would cling to that rope
cling to Jesus
when there is nothing else left
and when our world is full
cling still
for that is the most dangerous
of times.

“and you did not deny faith”.

Faith in Jesus' death. (John 1:4) That He took our place, that through his death we are united to God, and through His resurrection life, we have life. (1 John 1:2) Life, that while it is not free of trouble, is life that is full and free. “I am come that you might have life and have it in its fullness”. (John 10:10)

“Even in the days of Antipos, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed in your midst where Satan dwells” (Revelation 2: 13).

“Nevertheless I have a few things against you: (Revelation 2: 14)

1. You have some people there who are clinging to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balack to set a trap and a stumbling block before the sons of Israel. To entice them to eat food that had been sacrificed to idols and to practice lewdness – giving themselves up to sexual vice”.
2. ou also have some who in a similar way are clinging to the teaching of the Nicolaitans (those corrupters of the people), which thing I hate.

Even though they were so strong in their faith, they were not dealing with some items of wrong teaching. The general area of the sin was marrying people who worshipped idols – this eventually led them into idol worship and loose sexual living.

In one church that I remember, we had a large group of young people. The non-Christian young people started inviting the others out to parties. As time went on, the parties ended later and more and more alcohol was consumed. The Christian young people started dating the non-Christian kids and stories of sexual activities started to filter back. The matter was not dealt with “We don’t want to be too hard and lose all these kids – if they are coming to Church, they will hear the message – we just need to love them!” Well, we eventually lost not only the non-Christians but the Church family’s kids as well. Fifty to eighty young people lost because a church, of which I was a part, tolerated sin. I was not strong enough to speak out.

We date non-Christian or marry non-Christians or hang around with a group of non-Christians, we start to follow their gods:

“Can’t come to Church – need to get an early start for the beach”

“Had a late night, boy, am I tired”

“Bill doesn’t like me to come to Church on Sunday morning – he likes his baked dinner by 12:30”

“Don’t get much time to read my Bible and pray – seem to spend a lot of time talking to Mary”

“Went to the club with Jack and the gang last night”
etc...

The same applies to entering into business partnership with non-Christians – we are going to compromise, our Sabbath worship is going to be affected – their god (money, position or whatever) is different to ours.

“But now that you have come to know God, or rather are known by Him, how can you revert to dead and sterile principles and consent to be under their power all over again? (Galatians 4:9 - J B Phillips)”

“Repent then! Or else I will come to you quickly and fight against them with the sword of my mouth” (Revelation 2: 16).

As with the Christians at Ephesus, these Christians must repent. The call for repentance is to the Christians, not to those that practice the evil. Those that tolerate it in the Church are called to repent. Repentance includes the concept of doing something about the situation.

If there is a problem of wrong teaching in our Church, we must go to God and confess that we have sinned in not trying to stop it – not doing anything about our part in it – then seek God’s guidance in what we are to do. Remembering to differentiate between the sin and the sinner. “While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). There are a number of references in scripture on how to deal with problems in the Church – search them out.

If we do not repent and fight the error, we will find ourselves involved in a fight against our Lord Jesus. Opt for quiet and the status quo and we will be in trouble with Jesus. The verse reads “come to you and fight against them” so we will be involved in whatever happens.

The weapon that Jesus uses is the ‘double-edged sword’ of verse 12. If the ‘sword of my mouth’ is the ‘sword of the Spirit which is the word of God’, then Jesus will right error with words – the words of God.

What stops us standing up against error?
The fear of what people will say about us?
That they will call us strange?
That they will say we are unloving?
Too old fashioned?
That our name will be ...
Our name?

What does Jesus promise to those that overcome?
A new name!!
A new name on a white stone – our name on our ticket of
liberty and forgiveness.

Let them say what they like
Jesus will give us a new name
A precious name
A name that He has chosen
A name that will express who we really are
Really are – as freed and made full by ... Him

God is in charge

Words –

Words that teach error
and lead to death

Words that correct
and lead to life

Which do we speak?

CHAPTER TEN

Revelation 2

Revelation 2:18-29

“Unto the Angel of the Church in Thyatira write:

These things saith the Son of God, who has his eyes like unto flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know your works and charity, and service, and faith, your patience, your works; and that the last to be more than the first.

Notwithstanding I have a few things against you, because you suffer that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. I have her space to repent of her fornication; she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds, and I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searches the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

But unto you I say, unto the rest of Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak, I will put upon you none other burden, but that which you have already hold fast till I come ...

They that overcome and keep my work unto the end, to them will I give power over the nations. He shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I receive of my father.

And I will give him the morning star. They that have an ear, let them hear what the spirit says unto the churches.”

“Then to the angel of the assembly in Thyatira write:

There are the words of the Son of God, Who has eyes that flash like a flame of fire, and Whose feet glow like bright and burnished and white-hot bronze”.
(Revelation 2:18)

Eyes that see
Feet that crush

The Son of God

The lamb that was slain
has returned

No longer is He subject to man
No longer can they spit in His face
What will they think now?
Those that laughed at Him

What will we think
Who have been so busy with this and that
And have put Him in second place

What a Lord to follow
One who loved and suffered for us
And returns to rule

He sees into us
our thoughts
feelings
motives
needs
and drains out all that is unworthy

When Jesus looks at this group of believers He sees the following:

“I know your record and what you are doing: (Revelation 2:19)
your love
faith
services
patient endurance
that your recent works are more numerous and greater than your
first ones

But -

I have this against you
that you tolerate the woman Jezebel
who calls herself a prophet
(claiming to be inspired)
who is teaching
and leading astray my servants
and beguiling them into practicing sexual vice
and eating food sacrificed to idols.

(or being involved in things that are not of Me). (Revelation 2:20)

The difference between this Church and the Church at Pergamum is not so much in the sin being committed as in the attitude of the people in the church. There were two groups of people in this church. The powerful groups who went along with the false teaching - which was a further stage of the error at Pergamum. And those, the second group who fought against it but could not stop it.

Two things:

1. the error - no! the false teaching
2. the attitude of the two different groups

1. Error grows, unless it is dealt with, it will grow both in its depth and in the number of people who are entrapped by it. It will also grow more “respectable”, more acceptable. Beware “the little foxes that spoil the vine”. “He that is faithful in little is also faithful in much”. The same applies to our own life as it does in the church life. Let a little error stay and it will take root and grow. One drop of yeast can cause the whole loaf of dough to rise. As soon as you become aware of the problem in your life - deal with it, kill it. As soon as you become aware of a problem (error in teaching) in the church - remember:

a) the ways that scripture lays down for dealing with problems (Math 18:15-17, Math 5:23, 1 The 4:18, Tit 3:10, Col 3:36, 2 Thes 3:15, Cor 6:6, 1 The 4:6)

God is in charge

- b) the respect due to leaders (Rom 13:1-9)
- c) that there is a log in your own eye (Luke 6:42)
- d) that Christ loves the other person (John 3:16)

BUT deal with it, the problem, NOW

2. The people in the church at Pergamum knew of those in their presence who clung to false teaching but apparently did nothing to try and correct or stop it. Jesus warned the Christians in the church to repent. However, in the Thyatira church, there is no call to the Christians to repent – V24.1 reads “But to the rest of you in Thyatira who do not hold this teaching... I do not lay upon you any other fresh burdens; only hold fast to what you have until I come”. It seems that they have done the correct thing - they have tried to stop it but were powerless to do so. The reward of V26, 27 seem to uphold this. Jesus promises these powerless people, who have tried, power to rule – the thing they did not have in this life.

No call to repentance ... does this mean that it is too late? They have continued in error for so long that they are now too hard, too obstinate to repent!

We were once opposed by church people. We tried under God’s directions to set up a work. Some of the church people worked against us and God redirected how He would achieve His purpose. We had worked and prayed and persevered and eventually our Heavenly Father said to us “I do not lay on you any fresh burden; only hold fast to what you have until I come”. We must obey God but not carry the burden of it. Jesus has carried the burden, we must do our part, but it is “God that brings the increase”. It is up to God not us – do as God directs and go in peace. It is up to Him. (1 Cor3: 6-7)

“Put your cares on Him” (Peter 5:7)

“I gave her time to repent, but she has no desire to repent out of her immorality and refuses to do so”. (Revelation 2:21)

The whole of the Book of Revelation is God giving time, giving warnings, calling to people to repent but they turn and curse Him instead. Revelation is not, for the first twelve chapters, a book of God’s punishment – it is a book of Satan showing himself for what he is and of God showing Himself and His attitude to sin. But people do not repent – they have no excuse. (Rev 16:11)

“those who commit adultery with her, I will bring down” (Revelation 2:22)

It is not only false Christian leaders or teachers who suffer – those that follow them are also brought under God’s anger.

This implies that we have a responsibility for our own actions. We cannot say “The preacher said so”, if we follow some teaching, we are responsible, if we are deceived, we are responsible and will suffer.

Why?

We are instructed to obey the ruling authorities and to be in subjection to all authority but we are also called upon to test. (Romans 13:1-9)

“Beloved, do not put faith in every spirit, but prove the spirits to discover whether they proceed from God; for many fake prophets have gone forth into the world”.

(1 John 4:1)

We must check out what we are taught. Several ways come to mind and although this repeats what I have written earlier, it is worth repeating in this context.

“By this you may know the Spirit of God: every spirit which acknowledges and confesses the fact that Jesus Christ, the Messiah, actually has become man and has come in the flesh is of God – has God for its source”. (1 John 4:2)

“The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord”. God will guide us if we honestly want Him to”. (Prov 20:27)

“if any man lacks wisdom, let him ask God who gives to all men freely/fully”. I have proved the truth of this verse many times. Ask God for wisdom and listen to Him – not to yourself. (James 1:5)

“a good tree bringeth forth good fruit”. (Matthew 7:17)

God will never contradict anything that is in His word – “God is not a man that He should lie or the son of man that He should repent. Has He not said and will He not do it”. (Num 23:19)

Check it out in the Bible. Get a concordance and look up whatever subject you are interested in. Make sure you read the verses before and after whatever it is that you are interested in. Remember that the enemy used scripture to tempt Jesus but He gave it a meaning that twisted the applications. Jesus knew its reapplication and we have the same Spirit that He had, if we are sensitive to God’s guidance. (Luke 4:1-12)

An example – this Jezebel taught that sexual vice was okay. We could simply look up the Bible and read that “no immoral person will ever enter the Kingdom of God” (Romans 1:22-32). The same applies to drunkards, gossips, gluttons and homosexuals. Those that habitually practice these things will not enter Heaven. (Revelation 21:27)

(The word ‘habitual’ is important – it means that it is a deliberate practice, not a fall from which we have repented and turned away). No matter what our mind rationalises or our hearts or bodies tell us, there is no way around the absolute statements quoted in Romans Chapter 1.

The gift of discernment of spirits, or as the Amp Bible puts it – knowing whether something comes from God or not. This is a gift given for the building up of the church body – is it one of the “lost gifts?”. No!

Each of us will give an account for themselves. We cannot blame others – “I do not go to church because it is full of hypocrites” (Rom 14:12)

“And all the assemblies shall understand that I am He who searches minds – the thoughts, feelings and purposes and the innermost heart, and I will give to each of you as your work deserves”. (Revelation 2:23b)

“But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching... I do not lay upon you any other burden; only hold fast to what you have until I come”. (Revelation 2:24-25)

The incredible tenderness and understanding that is expressed in this verse. God knows how we feel, He knows our strength and weaknesses. He cares, He understands. He does not demand more than we are capable of giving. “God will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able to bear but will, with the temptation, test, provide a way to escape that you may be able to bear it”. (1 Cor 10:13)

One thing God constantly demands of us. The bottom line is always hang on to what you have – never give up. What do we have? Essentially it is faith that, through Jesus’ death and resurrection, we are saved from our sins and our relationship to God is restored, we must never give them up. (Rom 10:9)

And always the promise:

“He who overcomes and obeys My commands to the very end (Revelation 2:26-28) – doing the works that please me – I will give him:

1. authority and power over the nation; and
2. the Morning Star

A brief summary of the chapter will show the justice of the reward - cause and effect.

Jesus has eyes that see through all
His feet can crush
He sees this church's good work

and that the Church is growing in works
and some (V20 shows not all) are growing in faith
But behind the growing exterior He also sees evil
There is gangrenous rot there
False teaching leading to sexual bondage and participating in some
acts of worship to idols.

He also sees that some in the church have tried to resist and stand
against this very powerful group but have not been able to stop it.
Jesus says "I have deliberately delayed dealing with this as I want them
to turn from it. I have been patient.

But I will deal with them.
I know what each of your motives are.

I will give to each as they deserve
Death - spiritual as all die physically -
Power to those who hang on, who do not give in and follow this evil
You have tried to stop it but failed
I will give you power over the nations"

Remember the feet - to crush
They will be given the same power that God, the Father, gave to Jesus.

"AND I WILL GIVE YOU THE MORNING STAR"

What incredible gentleness
What love
What tenderness
Can you see the tender smile on the face of the Lord, the hard words,
then the reminder "I love you.."

THE MORNING STAR
I will give you everything

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Revelation 3

Revelation 3:1-6

“And unto the Angel of the Church in Sardis write:

These things say He that has the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know your works, that you have a name, that you live, and are dead. Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die for I have not found your works perfect before God.

Remember therefore how you have received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore you shall not watch, I will come on you as a thief, and you shall not know what hour I will come upon you.

You have a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white for they are worthy.

He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before his angels. He that has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says unto the churches.”

We start the letter to Sardis by going back to the original descriptions of Jesus in Chapter 1.

“These are the words of Him who has the seven Spirits of God (the sevenfold Holy Spirit) and the seven stars (the seven angels messengers)” (Revelation 1:20)

Jesus is the giver of the Holy Spirit (John 13:26). He is the one who sends the messengers (John 14-10). He sends the Holy Spirit. He and no other is the means of communication with God. Woe betide any church that thinks they can mouth words of praise to Jesus in chorus: but deny the reality of Him in their relationship with God.

This church was supposed to be alive and on the move, going places, growing, doing things, moving in the Spirit, BUT, Jesus says they were dead.

Why?

Had they taken their affection from Jesus, The Giver of the Holy Spirit, and begun to worship the gift instead of the giver (Ex 28:12-18). Had they become preoccupied with the gift the Holy Spirit gives, instead of the reason they were given it?

From there, it is a short trip to looking at ourselves and our gift and then to pride the downfall of the most powerful and beautiful of the pre-human creation angels - Lucifer. (Eze 28:13)

“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 shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore, said I, that He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.” (John 16:13-15)

This church needed to turn and repent. They needed to return to the source of their life. They needed to push aside all outward things and return to the essence of what they were about - their living and witness. They were told to strengthen what remained. To build on what little there was left.

What is the source of our life?
Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

The more social workers we become, the more we become self-conscious of the cross and the blood of the sacrifice. We talk about the things but not about Jesus' death, His death on the cross for us, for the person we are talking to. We become respectable, acceptable and feel it “not quite right” to talk of someone

else dying because of my sins – because of the sins of the people we are talking to. To talk of the resurrection is essential BUT we deny Jesus. “Whoever denies Me before man I will deny before my Father which is in Heaven”. (Matthew 10:33, 2 Timothy 2:12)

“I know your record and what you are doing; you are supposed to be alive but (in reality) you are dead. Rouse yourselves and keep awake, and strengthen and invigorate what remains and is on the point of dying; for I have not found a thing that you have done meeting the requirement of my God or perfect in His sight”. (Revelation 3:1)

God looks at the heart, the motive, God sees the reality of what is happening (1 Sam 16:7). We need to each look at our lives and ask why we do, say, etc.
What we do:

- to please others
- because it is expected of us
- because we are accustomed to doing those sort of things
- because we are Christians and want to do what is correct – we want to please God but it's a “work that we do”,

There is only one acceptable reason “for from Him and to Him and of Him are all things” (Rom 11:36).

What do we do about it?
Honestly look at ourselves and see where we are.
Don't be afraid
Remember those words of strength and comfort.

“The bruised reed He will not break the smoking flax. He will not quench”. (Isaiah 42:3)

When we look at ourselves, we may find that we are a bruised reed ready to break or a smoking piece of wood ready to go out. It ultimately does not matter, so long as we find out where we are and go from there.

How to go on? Jesus tells us to return our thinking to the basics “remember therefore how you have received and heard” (Revelation 3:1)

Remember that you and I are sinners deserving of separation from God our source.

Remember that Jesus/God cared enough about us to take our place in the day to day world we live in. To face all the temptation that the enemy could throw at Him and after He had overcome it, He took our failures on Himself.

Remember that He died, was separated from God for us - me and you.

Picture ourself being whipped, spat at, hanging naked before a crowd who laughed at you. Picture ourself with the guilt of every sin ever committed by millions of people and picture ourself separated from God our Father, our real self, for the first time in our external existence.

Remember "that God so loved Allan that He gave His only begotten son that if Allan shall believe in Him, Allan shall have eternal life". (John 3:16)
Your name fits.

Remember that God raised Him from the dead and that the same power dwells in us - you. (Ephesians 1 & 2)

REMEMBER and repent.

Then "strengthen the things that remain .. hold fast. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment. (Revelation 3:2)

Build on where we are at
Start with what we have

Do not wish and waste ourself with whining

Build

Strengthen

Read the letter of God to us

Read it

Think about it

Write it on our hand

On our mirror

Behind the toilet door

Keep it in mind

Know God is with me/you each day

Picture Him there

Talk to Him

Tell Him what you are thinking

What interests you

What concerns you

God is in charge

“Rouse yourself” – we must make the effort (Revelation 3:3)
Practice being aware of His presence each moment.

“Yet you still have a few person’s names in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes, and they shall walk with Me in white, because they are worthy and deserving”. (Revelation 3:4)

It is one of those apparent contradictions in scripture that we must show what we believe and what we are by the way we behave, yet the way we behave and act does not necessarily show that we believe and are. If our acts are “works” which do not flow from our union with Christ (John 14:6). No, rather from Christ within us, then they are attempts to earn favour with God and are ultimately attempts to come to God in some other way than through our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, as James writes, “faith without flowing out in works is dead” (James 2:14-26 - paraphrase).

“Thus shall he who is victorious be clad in white garment, and I will not erase or blot out his name from the Book of Life; I will acknowledge them as Mine, and I will confess their name openly before my Father and before His angels”. (Revelation 3:5)

Points:

a) Instead of the works that come from wrong motives (including just going on, and including, just being good and nice) Jesus will give His people “white garments” – purity. This is already ours.

The things we do
people see
like our clothes
they admire them
envy them
praise us
or ignore us

But

Jesus will give us something
really worth looking at
white
pure
covering

b) If you are dead, your name is taken off the electoral role. No matter how sick and feeble you are, your name still stays on the role as long as you are alive.

The same with God. While the faintest trace of the life of Christ is in you, your name will stay in His Book of Life (see Rev 20:12-15). This is probably a contentious issue but read Verse 2 again. The warning is there - “strengthen what remains and is on the point of dying”.

I guess we all know the two opinions “once saved, always saved” and “saved today, lost tomorrow” - both are apparently supported by scripture. This verse seems to favour the second opinion, i.e. ‘on the point of dying’.

I would like to balance the two views (scripture interprets scripture) with “I am persuaded that He is able to keep that I committed unto Him until that day”.

He is able
He will keep
BUT
Have I committed?

Find out where you are - honest to God and self
Commit to God
Strengthen what you have
God will keep you - don't treat Him casually

“God is not mocked for whatsoever a man sows that will He reap”
(Gal 6:7).

“I will confess his name openly before My Father and His angels”
(Math 10:32).

This verse led me to the comments made earlier. As the church grows more socially acceptable, we tend to become self-conscious of our origins - the other side of the tracks? Not deliberately, but have you ever caught yourself hesitating before saying something about The Lord? Something that came into your mind but before you got it out your mouth, you hesitated? “Not the right time”, “Not the right place”, “They wouldn't understand”, “I'll think about that” and so on. Is this not being in embarrassment of Jesus?

God is in charge

He hung on the cross for us and they laughed at Him, yet He did it for us!
“I will confess His name openly before My Father and His angels”.

Pray every day for opportunity to let it be known that you belong to Christ
Jesus our Lord!

CHAPTER TWELVE

Revelation 3

Revelation 3:7-13

“and to the Angel of the Church in Philadelphia write:

These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that has the key of David, he that opens and no man shuts, and shuts and no man opens; I know your works:

Behold, I have set before you an open door, and no man can shut it: For you have a little strength, and have kept my word, and have not denied my name.

Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

Because you have kept the word of my patience. I also will keep you from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold I come quickly; hold that fast which you have, that no man take your crown.

Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, by which is New Jerusalem, which comes down out of Heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name.

He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches.

Once again the message is to the angel or messenger of the Church. As much as I personally do not like the idea of the leader or head of the church being given the instructions – God could just as easily have spoken to each of us individually, it seems to be the constant string throughout scripture that God directs to the leader and holds him and the people responsible. There are warnings about testing the spirits and about the people taking leaders who tell them what they want to hear “heap unto themselves ministers having itching ears” (1 John 4:1). We are also told to be “subject to the ruling authorities” (2 Tit 4:3). There is a point, however, where God requires us to not be subject to the rulers of the land and the church – we are always ultimately accountable to God for our own actions – we cannot blame others (Romans 13:1-9). Where is the division – where is it that we say “I do not agree but I will go along with the leader” or “No, that is out of bounds. I will not follow”.

There is the obvious act of denying the Lord Jesus of saying that He is not of God, not the “only begotten of the Father” (John 3:16). The ultimate act of denial of Jesus will be to obey the ruler of the day and acknowledge that he is God and thereby receive the mark that will allow you to continue to live in this physical world. The mark of the beast or anti Christ. (Rev 13:16-18)

The 10 Commandments are always the baseline (Exodus 20:2-17). There is also the constant reminder in the New Testament, especially in Revelation to keep away from immorality (which I take to mean sexual looseness).

Not to worship idols – putting things or ideas before God. But there are other areas of doctrines that we may disagree with. Perhaps there will always be at least one thing we disagree with in any church we go to. That, on its own, does not mean we leave that church. When do we “come apart and be separate from them” (2 Cor 6:17) (used in separate churches but spoken about separating from unbelievers).

We need to be faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor 6:14). Any teaching that allows some other way to God except through the death and resurrection of Jesus must be absolutely rejected. (Acts 4:12, 2 John 10)

Do not listen to your feelings or even your brain – listen to God’s Holy Spirit. He will tell you when to object, be still or speak up, or leave.

Note the condemnations of those who “scorn and reject authority” (Jude 8).

God speaks to us individually but he speaks through our church leaders as well.

The message that was given to the angel, a messenger to the church at Philadelphia, starts with a statement of some characteristics of the giver that will emphasise the message.

(Revelation 3:7)

“These things saith He, Jesus, that:

- a) is holy
- b) is true
- c) hath the key of David
- d) opens and no man shuts, shuts and no man opens

a) What does “holy” tell us about our Lord? (1 John 1:5 - Vines page 565)

“God is light and in Him is no darkness at all”. Vines brings out the meaning as “separation to God”. Jesus was separated from everything except God. He was in the world, intimately involved with people but totally set aside to God. Every thought and emotion and will was captive to God. “He was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows” (Heb 1:9). The Amp Bible reads “The oil of exultant joy”. He was the happiest man who ever lived yet He was the holiest – His happiness came from being “separated to God” and so will ours.

b) What does “true” tell us about our Lord? (Vines page 1181)

From Vines we pick up several insights into its meaning:

- unconcealed
 - true to fact
 - real
 - He is “very good in distinction from all... false Gods”
 - truth in all its fullness and scope
 - integrity of character
- (The Amp Bible uses the term “uncompromisingly righteous”)

c) “hath the key of David”

The promised saviour was to come through the line of David. Salvation was through his descendants and Jesus has the key of salvation. Jesus was of the earthly line of David.

d) “opens and no man shuts” and “shuts and no man opens”

Jesus opens the way to God and no one can stop us going in. “What shall separate us from the love of God, neither height nor depth nor angles, nor principalities nor powers...” (Rom 8:3-39)

All the torture and persecution down the centuries has not shut the door. People have died in agony rather than deny – some have given in and lost their saviour (maybe they came back) – but others have not given in. People have stood against the temptations that Satan has put on them and not denied their Lord Jesus on a permanent basis.

If we look at the rest of the message, we will gain insight into the opened and closed doors. Verse 8 talks of Jesus setting before them “a door wide open which no one is able to shut” and then talks of them having little power but remaining faithful, faithful when faced with opposition from those who say they are God’s people and are not. They are really following Satan. They are told to “hold fast what you have”. God’s love and memory are with them. (See also Mark 23:11)

From the above, I suggest that the opposition of the religious people was aimed at having them deny Jesus or worship the empire or some other deity. They are being encouraged to hang on in there by Jesus saying that He opens the door to God and these people do not have the power to deny them access to God.

“I am the way (the door?), the truth and the life. No one comes unto the Father but by Me”. (John 14:6)

The enemy constantly puts up anti Christs, substitute Christ, adds things to salvation only through our Lord Jesus Christ. He is very subtle, can be very quiet, his purpose is to distract our attention from Jesus. Why do you think that there is so much division over the gifts? He will put up any division to distract us from having a living relationship with Jesus – or God the Father through Jesus. Note that the Holy Spirit would come to reveal Jesus to us. “When He the Spirit of Truth is come, He will magnify me from He will take what is mine and show it to you” (John 16:14).

Some of the debates are used to separate us from Christ by diverting our thoughts and emotions into other areas:

- are gifts for today or did they (or some of them) end at Apostolic age?
- tongues – of God or the enemy?
- baptism or baptisms?
- immersion or sprinkling?

- infant or believers' baptism?
- predestination or free will?
- the priesthood of all believers or only ordained priests?

Jesus is the only door to God and no one and nothing can close the door.
“What shall separate us from the love of God” (Rom 8:39).

Nothing shall separate us from the love of God.

BUT JESUS ALSO CLOSES THE DOOR!

We can grieve the Holy Spirit of God and we can crucify Christ again by abandoning Him totally (Eph 4:30). The more we reject His voice, the harder it becomes to hear, the more we fail to respond, the harder it becomes to respond (Heb 6:6). The door will be closed permanently one day, either by our death or the events foretold in Revelation. But for now, either to non-Christians or to Christians, Jesus speaks to us. We must respond – how could we not.

(Revelation 3:8)

“I have set before a door wide open, which no one is able to shut.”

(Revelation 3:9)

“Take note! I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say they are Jews and are not, but lie. Behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and learn and acknowledge that I have loved you”.

Those people who put you down, talk about you, say things behind your back, say you are “strange”. If you really belong to God then one day God will cause these people – whether they belong to Him or not – to acknowledge that God loves you. God is a God of comfort and these are words to be comforted by. If we belong to God and are open to Him, we can honestly review any criticism that is directed at us. If we can do this and handle God’s answer, it does not matter what anyone says about us – God loves us – we need not feel insecure and second rate. We can feel quiet and confident inside because we know that God loves us. One day (not for revenge, but because we love those other Christians who criticise us) the others will know it too. Now, for some reason, they feel threatened by us but then, when they are secure in the knowledge that God loves them and us, they will love us too.

Treat them in love.

The verse is of course referring to those who say they are Christians but are not. God is saying that one day they will know that He is real and that He loves you. Take comfort, not in thoughts of revenge, but in the certain knowledge that God loves you.

Pray for those other people that they may come to know God's love instead of facing His wrath.

“Because you have guarded and kept my word of patient endurance, I will also keep you from the hour of trial (testing) which is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell upon the earth” (Revelation 3:10).

We have talked before about patient endurance, about it not being fatalism but an active trust in God, an active going on nomatter what. “Even if He slays me yet will I trust in Him?” (Job 13:15).

These seven letters all carry one central message:

- hang on
- don't give up
- keep going
- no matter what

(Revelation 3:10 - Amplified Version) ‘EXPECTANT ENDURANCE’

“The hour of trial (testing) which is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell upon the earth” (Revelation 3:10).

Who is excluded from this “testing”...

Christians? No, not even the ones at Philadelphia – they were kept safe because they had already been tested and proven faithful.

Non-Christians? No

Me? No

You?

A trial or a testing is used to prove something, to show what you know or are – you can brag all you like but a test shows what is really there. Strong's Concordance tells me that the Greek word used is “saleuo” “from the root word ‘salos” -

“salos” – wave

“saleuo” – move, shake, stir

This clears up an apparent contradiction that has often bothered me. “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil - neither tempts He any person (with evil)” James 1:13. (Peirasmos - examine, prove, try)

and “God did tempt Abraham” (Nacah - test, prove, try) (Gen 22:1) and allowed Jesus to be tested, “led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil” (Matthew 4:1) (Peirasmos - examine, prove, try).

also “God will not allow you to be tempted above that you are able” (1 Cor). (Peirasmos). These all have similar meanings but none are the modern understanding - i.e, tempt, meaning to try and make me do wrong. The real meaning is God allows tests (troubles) to make us aware of what is inside us to strengthen our trust in Him, and to turn us closer to Him. Satan tempts us with evil to make us go against God by doing, thinking, feeling things that are not of God.

The word used in Revelation 3:10 is different in that it tells us That God is going to make the world unstable to test the people of the world. The world emphasises the physical elements of life - body, soul and spirit - God’s order is to sanctify you wholly; spirit, soul and body” (1 Th 5:23). God is going to disrupt the physical world. The security of governments, possessions, our bodies will have pain and discomfort, even the mountains will move. Then people will have a chance to see who they believe in. When the physical is shown to not be lasting and real then we have the opportunity to see reality and respond to Him. If reality were to break through and we should see Him as He is! (Gal 4:4) Later chapters will show how people respond.

But how do you and I respond when our physical world is disrupted. It’s okay when all goes well. We can go on our way and it’s easy to have a belief in the back of our head that we are Christians. It may not be easy to grow but it is easy to go on. But when trouble comes, bills, sickness, tiredness, fights and bad feelings with the spouse or at work or with friends - when these things come it shows what is within us. This is our chance to grow, to be real, to turn to God. God has given us this opportunity (forget questions of whether it is God’s direct or permissive will) to grow. It will show what is in us. A test shows how much we have learned. God will give us the answers if we will have them.

The Amplified Bible uses the expressions “safe from the hours of trial”

- Safe from what?
- The physical suffering
- The persecution

Or

God is in charge

- The possibility of spiritual falling
- They had but little power yet were faithful
- So God would keep their faith safe in Himself

It may mean safe in physical suffering or safe from, meaning not having to go through it, or safe in spiritual trial, or not having to go through the major spiritual battle that was coming on the world.

Whatever is meant
God is in control
We must trust God
Leave it up to God

Go quietly and calmly through whatever comes

AND GOD WILL KEEP HIS SIDE OF THE DEAL

This church had little strength but they used what they had, so God promised to keep them from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”

(Revelation 3:10)

Trials and temptations have come and will come into our lives - we must use whatever strength we have and God will do the rest.

(Revelation 3:11)

“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”

“Once saved, always saved”

“Saved today, lost tomorrow”

I do not consider that either of the above are valid discussions points at this time. The point here is that we have a responsibility to hold on. We must make a deliberate effort/choice to obedience to what God has revealed to us. The outcome does not matter. The outcome is God’s business. Our business is to be faithful, to be obedient to HANG IN THERE. To go on trusting God. What did Job say? “even if He slays me, yet will I trust Him.” (Job 13:15)

Whether you face an active persecution disinterest being ousted by religion or simply being so busy the call from Jesus is “hold that fast which you have or, “hang on to what you have” for it seems that it is possible to “lose your crown”.

I take losing your crown to mean still being saved but “by the skin of your teeth.” Your reward is however lost. (1 Cor 3:15)

I do not understand this concept of rewards in heaven – simply being saved and being in God’s presence is so immense a reward in itself. However, the concept is there and is for those who abide in Christ. In the letter to Laodicea Jesus threatens to reject the people altogether, but not so with these people. They are persecuted by the religious group and Jesus is gentle and encouraging to them.

“I come quickly” (2 Peter 3:8)

A day is a thousand years to God (Math 25:1)
but remember the bridesmaid?
the foolish ones were not ready
the wise ones were ready and expectant
of the groom’s arrival at any time.

Today?
This minute?
It matters not
He will come
and soon
Live now

AND NOW THE PROMISE

(Revelation 3:12)

“He who overcomes
I will make him:

A pillar in the sanctuary of My God;
he shall never be put out of it
or go out of it,
and I will write on him the name of My God,
and the name of the city of My God,
The new Jerusalem which descends from My God out of heaven and my own
new name”

Remember that these people:

- had but little power
- were faithful to Jesus in the face of oppositions

God is in charge

- were opposed by the “religious” group who did not: really belong to God but to the ‘law’
- were apparently told by this group that they did not belong to God
- took it all with an expectant anticipation of trust in God

These people were promised:

- to be kept safe from the hour of testing
- to be made a permanent part of God’s temple
- to be in God’s presence forever
- to never be out of God’s presence
- to be named as God’s people in various ways:
 - name of God written on them
 - name of God’s address to be on them
 - name of Jesus. His new name...
 - Conqueror?
 - Ruler?
 - Lord?

What incredible confidence this should give us. No matter what it is like now – one day we will be so obviously God’s people! Maybe at the moment it does not yet appear what we are, but then! We need not despair that we do not show Christ through us, yet look to what we will be in God’s presence and it will begin to show now.

Even our enemy will be set back when we look to what we are in reality for it will show in us now and will provide a barrier against him getting at us and disquieting us.

These people were not strong – God gave them strength by these promises – the same for us.

“He who can hear, let him listen to and hear what the spirit says to the assemblies” (Revelation 3:13).

If it all passes through without touching, we need to ask God to open our ears. However, what we have heard, with God’s help, we must hear – do , act, live.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Revelation 3

Revelation 3:14-22

“Unto the church of the Loadiceans write:

These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; (Amplified Bible: the origin and beginning and the author of God’s creation).

I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would you were cold or hot. So then because you re lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth. Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich, and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness does not appear; and anoint your eyes with eyesalve, that you may see.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore and repent. Behold I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in and will sup with him, and he with me.

To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne. Even as I also overcome and am set down with my father and his throne. He that has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says unto the church.”

“To the angel (messenger) of the assembly in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the trusty and faithful and true witness, the Origin and Beginning and Author of God’s creation”. (Revelation 3:14)

Once again the Lord starts out by emphasising that part of His character or power which is relevant to the particular church.

Amen – so be it
I agree with that
That is correct
That is what we say/want
The final word – no argument

Witness – one who tells what happens
Some witnesses are false
So the Lord emphasises his trustworthiness

- trusty
- faithful
- true

If we believe what the bible says then we must accept that what the Lord says about us is true. So often, we reject or refuse to hear those quiet stirrings of the Lord in our mind or feelings or stomach? What He says to us, we must hear – how many verses of the bible do we shut our ears to? Or rationalise? Or spiritualise?

Jesus further lays out His credentials by stating that He was the first cause of all creation – including us. All things were made by Him; without Him nothing was made. Nothing exists without Jesus, all creation is dependent upon Him (John 1:3). “In Him we live and more and have our being”.

“All creation groans waiting for the redemption of the sons of God”- waiting for the full number to come. What is the significance of this?

What He is about to say to us is very hard, therefore He is careful to lay out who He is and that He therefore has the right to say what He is about to say.

“I know your record of works and what you are doing; you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth!” (Revelation 3:15)

What a horrible, common word to use “spew” – does the enemy distract us from the message by concentrating our reaction on “Gentle Jesus meek and mild’ by using such a word on the reality of His discount? (“you make me sick”).

Jesus is saying that because we go along and are really indifferent to Him, indifferent to the reality of His death in our place – He will reject us. Lukewarm is an uncaring word, an indifferent word. Cool water is refreshing to drink and hot water is comforting and warming. Both provide refreshment and comfort but lukewarm water tends to turn the stomach. You can only take a metaphor so far and obviously the cold in this reference cannot be refreshing as it is cold to Jesus. People who are actively anti-Christians do, however, provide a service to the Lord as they make us Christians show what is inside us. They stir us up or make us bide. Indifference dulls and kills and is dangerous to others. It provides nothing but sadness to Our Lord.

Indifference or lukewarm can be cured:

Keith Green wrote:

“My eyes are dry
 My faith is old
 My heart is hard
 My prayers are cold
 And I know how I ought to be
 Alive to you and dead to me

 Oh what can be done
 For an old heart like mine
 Soften it up with oil and wine
 The oil is You, Your Spirit of love
 Please wash me anew
 In the wine of Your Blood”.

(Reference – Song “My Eyes are Dry” by Keith Green)

The key to returning to the Lord is perseverance. We need to repent, yes, we need to say the words even if we do not feel them, even if it is mechanical. We must ask for forgiveness in the cleansing death of Jesus Christ. We need to remember, put on our new birth in His resurrection. We need to remember that in us dwells the power that raised Jesus from the dead (Eph 1). That God said “be still and know that I am God” (Ps 46:10). My experience has been that, to get back into line with God, I must do all these things but it does not happen quickly. If I want to be aware of God’s presence with me I cannot just say “Sorry Lord”. I become aware of His presence little by little.

Some things I have found helpful in overcoming lukewarming are:

1. make a deliberate decision that you have drifted – you are lukewarm or cold.
2. repent – even if it is mechanical and without feeling – do it anyway. Ask God for the Spirit's presence to help us. We do not know how to pray as we should but the Spirit who knows the mind of God with groans that cannot be heard.
3. read the bible – even if it goes in the eyes and out again – do it every day. It is building strength. (Rom 8:26, 8:15,16)
4. play bible tapes in the car and at home and when going to sleep – even if you don't consciously listen – have it in the background – it will build up your spirit.
5. deliberately have a short sentence, or part thereof, of scripture held in your mind – bring your thoughts back to it time and time again through the day and night – turn it over, let it go round in your mind.
6. set a deliberate time of prayer aside each day – even if no words come, even if it seems a waste of time – get a book of prayers and read them if that helps – but do it!

PERSEVERE

Hang in for weeks, months, even years if necessary and you will find Him. The letters to the seven churches constantly repeat “They that conquer or hand on till the end shall be saved”.

Notice the beginning of verse 15 – Jesus says “I know what you are doing”. He knows each and everything we do – “well that's not too bad” you say, “I don't do many things that are not good”. Read the next bit and you are I are caught! “I know... you are neither, cold nor hot”. Our motives are known. These people were rejected not because their works were unacceptable but because their attitude was out of line.

“For you say, I am rich, I have prospered and grown wealthy, and I am in need of nothing; and do not realise and understand that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, naked. Therefore, I counsel you to purchase from Me gold refined and tested by fire, that you may be truly wealthy, and white clothes to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nudity from being seen and salve to put on your eyes that you may see” (Revelation 3:17-18).

The first section of the above needs no explanation but we need to apply it to ourselves. We need to look carefully at ourselves and our church. How

comfortable, self-satisfied are we with our life. Do we look at our physical life both of possessions and activities and say that our lives are full. We must distinguish between the physical and the spiritual. These people were looking at the physical aspect of their lives and saw that all was well – Jesus looked at the spiritual side and saw emptiness.

Look at our church activities:

- Deacons meetings
- Bible school teaching
- Committee meetings
- Fundraising activities
- etc..
- etc..

These may all be part of God’s leading for your church or they may simply be “things” that happen. Look behind each thing we do in the Christian life (which is all our life), examine each one individually and see if it has a spiritual purpose. By spiritual I do not mean “holier than thou” but that the spiritual is the real world – if reality were, to break through – we are spiritual beings who live in physical bodies. Our bodies will be remade, it is our spiritual life that is important. There are extremes in all things, so please do not push the above too far as scripture is full of instructions for caring for the physical needs of people. Being Church Treasurer or Secretary or Cleaner are spiritual – it is the motive for “doing” that has to be looked at. Doing - faith/trust cannot be separated – even waiting can be “doing”. (read James)

Perhaps Oswald Chambers expresses it more clearly “The warfare is not against sin; we can never fight against sin: Jesus Christ deals with sin in Redemption. The conflict is along the line of turning our natural life into a spiritual life, and this is never done easily (My Utmost for His Highest - Sept 18th). It is done only by a series of moral choices. God does not make us holy in the sense of character; He makes us holy in the sense of innocence, and we have to turn that innocence into holy character by a series of moral choices. These choices are continually antagonistic to the entrenchments of our natural life, the things which erect themselves as ramparts against the knowledge of God. We can either go back and make ourselves of no account in the Kingdom of God, or we can determinedly demolish these things and let Jesus bring another child to glory”.

In summary, do not look at your physical life or at your church's physical programs. Look at your spiritual life, look at what is behind our church's programs, etc. This is what Jesus looks at.

Do not fall into the trap of rejecting physical works, however. Remember that scripture says "that if you see a brother and sister in need and say be warm be filled and go on your way without doing what you can for them; then you are to show faith by our works" (James 2:16). What is inside has to show itself in the way we live. What is on the outside can be used to cover the lack on the inside.

Remember Jesus is the "true Witness".

What are we to do about this situation – even if it only applies to us in a very slight sense. Verse 18 tells us to do several things:

1. Buy from Jesus gold refined and tested by fire that you may be truly wealthy. What can we use to buy from Jesus?

a) He owns all the physical possessions and giving physical things to others will not do.

b) Perhaps we can spend our lives in service to others or to Jesus? Jesus says that the church at Laodices was trying this but it did not work!

Verse 15 "I know your record of works and what you are doing" and they were rejected.

c) The only thing left is ourselves!!!

How do we do this?

"Wait on the Lord
Wait, I say, on the Lord"
(Psalm 27:14, 62:5)

"Freely you have received,
freely give"
(Matthew 10:8)

As I have pondered over the past two days on how to give ourselves to the Lord, a thought comes to my mind. That is – how do we give ourselves to another person?

We decide that we want to be close to them and that we want a permanent arrangement. We make a deliberate decision to be committed to that person. We deliberately set out to get to know them – to spend time with them. We stop going out with others – who draw us into apathy?

We think about them.
Pleasing them is behind what we do.

“Give yourselves to God as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.”

This is an ongoing commitment, but it needs to start ...

God has an incredible sense of humour? – justice?
If we give ourselves of Him
To buy gold refined and tested by fire
The gold He gives us back
... is ourselves ...

“The trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ”. (1 Peter 1:7)

2. “buy of Me, white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed” (Revelation 3:18).

There are things in each of us that we do not let others see. We cover up and clothe ourselves in expected attitudes, words and actions. If we go to God, He will give us genuine clothes – not to cover up but to give us real righteousness. We do not then have to cover our faults for God can deal with them.

The clothes
The righteousness
comes from Jesus

3. “and salve to put on your eyes that you may see”

They said that all was well, that they had need of nothing – how can you tell a self-satisfied person anything. Jesus seems to be saying here that, if they are going to understand, they need to ask Him to open their eyes.

We need to ask Jesus to open our eyes- the times when we are most confident of ourselves are the times we are in most danger. When we are seeking guidance, we are going to God and are conscious of the need of Him. When we go happily on our way, we must be aware of the need to check back to our source and ask Him to keep us seeing as He does – reality. This is our confidence.

We also need to pray for others that “the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know...” (Eph 1:18)

“Those who I dearly and tenderly love, I tell their faults and convict and convince and reprove and chasten – this is, I discipline and instruct them” (Revelation 3:19)

What words of comfort and tenderness – it is nothing to fear to be rebuked by someone who loves you – it is only our own insecurity that makes us rebel and feel threatened.

But Jesus dearly and tenderly loves you
What is the motive for correcting someone?
Why do we correct our children?
Because they embarrass us?
Because they annoy us?
Because we are tired and irritable and busy?
Because we want them to grow strong in character?
What is God’s motive for correcting us?

“Those I love”
The first motive is because He loves us
If He didn’t love us, He wouldn’t rebuke and correct us
If He didn’t love us, He would simply leave us to take the consequences of our sins and errors.

Sometimes things do not always go right,
So rejoice – God loves you!!
Be constantly aware of Christ within us,
Walk in union with Him.

“Convict, convince, reprove, chasten”
but no mention of punish!
It may seem like we are being punished
but it is not
It is correction because we are loved.

Amplified Bible “that is I discipline and instruct them”

“instruct them”
not just say “No, that is wrong”
but
“that’s not how you do it”
“you do it this way”
“see - WATCH ME”.

When you love someone you redirect them into right paths of doing and thinking.

Jesus is our example of right actions and thoughts and words

Watch Him

Our reaction to Jesus correcting and instructing us is to:

1. “be enthusiastic and in earnest and burning with zeal, and repent - changing your mind and attitude” (Revelation 3:19b). This is one of my great problems - being enthusiastic. So it looks like the cure for me is to look to the Lord’s correcting and training of me and to realise how much He loves me! and to repent of my lack of enthusiasm.

“Repent - changing your mind and attitude”
Deliberately include Jesus in everything.

2. Open up our lives and let Him in. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears and listens to and heeds My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will eat with him, and he shall eat with Me” (Revelation 3:20)

If Jesus is our example - let Him in!

In those days, you did not eat with someone unless you accepted them. Even today, you do not normally invite someone to your home to share a meal with you unless you like them. Notice, however, that it is Jesus asking if he can come to your house so that He can share with you and you with Him. He wants us to share with Him.

He wants to open our lives to Him. He wants His life to flow through us. He wants to be part of us and us to be part of Him.

We must hear
Then we must do
Open the door
of our lives
and let Jesus in
in the common things of life -
Eating
Working
Sleeping
Walking
or, just being still.

Notice that He is talking to church people. Church people who are not letting Him into their lives. Open our lives to Jesus - spend time quietly with Him - turn a verse over in the mind each day - commit each day to Him - commit each thought to His control "bring every thought captive to Jesus". TAKE HIM WITH YOU INTO EVERY MOMENT OF EACH DAY.

"I will come in" - it's a promise
"and eat with him, and he shall eat with Me".

Jesus will not only come into our lives but will share our lives. And not just the exciting mountain top experiences but the ordinary day by day experiences - He will share them. What could be more every day than eating, and Jesus promises to share that. We need to become conscious of His presence, of His sharing of our lives, in every moment of them, in:

joy
sadness
excitement
tiredness
but not boredom
for nothing could be boring to Him,
or lukewarm.
And now the promise:

“He who overcomes, is victorious. I will grant him to sit beside Me on My throne, as I Myself overcome, was victorious and sat down beside My Father on His Throne. (Revelation 3:21)”

Remember this is the lukewarm church that was working hard – overcoming is more than working hard. Overcoming is a choice of Jesus the Christ being part of our daily lives. It is not going on without Him. It is talking to Him about our church plans and our meetings and our programs. He must be part of everything.

Victorious over mediocracy, over being busy, over being active (activity not directed by Jesus), over being lukewarm.

The reward or promise fits the thing to be overcome. This church had position, respect and wealth – all in worldly sense. Jesus our Lord tells them to look behind that empty front. He tells them to give up themselves, their position, their self-confidence and live with Him. If they do this, He will give them true position, true power, true wealth. True power is related to our position with God not with the world. True position is not our position in society but our position in relation to God:

Look at Jesus the Christ
Where do I stand with Him?
Where do our children stand with Him?

“What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world but lose his soul?”
(Mark 8:36)

“He who overcomes As I Myself overcame ...”
(Revelation 3:21)

Who is our example?
Who do we look to, to see how it is done?
Who do we see ahead of us?

How did Jesus overcome? What did He do, think, feel, etc. to enable Him to overcome?

“Lo, as it is written in the volume of the book – I come to do thy will Oh Lord” (Heb 10:7). His motivation, His sole objective was to do God’s will. When He faced the cross, it was “Father, if it is possible, remove this cup from me – nevertheless not my will be done BUT YOURS”

And God's will was:

- His death
- Our salvation
- His resurrection
- Our life (for Him and for us)

How do we translate this into our lives?

How do we translate "doing God's will" into our day to day existence? Over 40 years of being a Christian, I have been through a number of stages. I will tell you the end result for me, and I emphasise for me as we each must give account for ourselves. Staying in touch with God is the starting place (assuming one is a Christian)(Romans 14:12). I must stay open to God ... it is very easy ... I wrote the last four words over two weeks ago and have spent that time being a living example of not doing God's will. Last night the Lord pulled me up. I was having my customary Bible reading before going to bed and I read in Haggai 1:1-10 "Is it time for you, yes you, to dwell in your ceiled houses and my kingdom on earth lie waste? Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; he that earns wages earns wages to put it into a bag with holes" and I thought Lord, that's me! "thus saith the Lord of host; Consider your ways ... Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? Saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house". It spoke very clearly to me that instead of getting on and writing this book - 12 months now I have been at it - I found every excuse to wander off and work on the house and garden. "It is very easy" to what? To wander off spiritually, to let the cares of this world stop us from doing God's will. We have to make a determined effort to obey. But not in stress - in love in God's mercy and joy.

Staying open to God is the first thing in knowing His will. The second thing is not agonising for months and years over it. I have found that this is a destructive thing that stops us doing or being anything. Ask God's guidance, expect to receive it then "do whatever your hand finds to do. Do it with all your attention" (Eccles 9:10 - Amplified Versions). In other words, use the ability and knowledge and the mind that God has given us and do what is appropriate - BUT if you feel a check or unease in your spirit - no matter how quiet it is - STOP - DO NOTHING - PRAY and go on with whatever else is happening and wait for guidance on the first matter.

Stay open to God. He will speak to you through many different means. Jesus is our example in all things.

“He who overcomes (is victorious) I will grant him to sit beside Me on My throne, as I Myself overcame (was victorious) and sat down beside My Father on his throne” (Revelation 3:21).

Remember V14? These are the words of the trusty and faithful and true witness, so if He makes a promise we know that we can totally rely upon it. The promise is: “I will grant him to sit beside Me on My throne”.

The ultimate place,
The ultimate victory
The ultimate security
IS CERTAIN

Our Lord Jesus then adds that we must do as He did, “overcome” – over what – over come – and come to Him – over temptation – over Satan – over our failures – triumphant! He had to go through it – we must also – the big difference is that He had an enemy that was not conquered – and He conquered Him. We face a defeated enemy and we are guaranteed victory if we want it and if we use the weapons that we are given. God’s grace, forgiveness and the Holy Spirit of God as our companion, teacher and guide. (John 14-16)

“The spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance” (Eph 1:14). “The immeasurable greatness of His power in and for us who believe, (Eph 1:19) which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places”.

Now Christ can raise us up.

“He who is able to hear, let him listen to and heed what the Holy Spirit says to the assemblies” (Revelation 3:22).

God can make us able to hear if we will but listen.

Puts the Father, Son and Holy Spirit together – “He who overcomes I will grant him to sit beside Me on My throne, as I Myself overcame and sat down beside My Father on His throne. Heed what the Spirit says to the assemblies” (Revelation 3:21-22).

A quick re-read of the seven letters shows a continuing message to be real and open to God and to keep going, to overcome and not to give up no matter what the external circumstances are.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Revelation 4

Revelation 4:1-11

PRAISE TO OUR LORD

(I will only quote the sections I wish to comment on. Remember the purpose of this article – to show its relevance to our daily lives).

“After this I looked and Lo a door! STANDING OPEN IN HEAVEN!”
(Revelation 4:1).

Heaven is still open
We can still enter into God’s presence
It is not too late

“Today’s the day of salvation” (11 Cor 6:2)

Not just unlocked, or ajar, but standing open. Jesus has opened the door to heaven (Matthew 16:19). He not only tore the gates of hell off but He opened the door to God. (Rev 1:18) It is Jesus who has the keys to life, to death, to hell and heaven – Jesus NOT Satan. We need not live in dread and fear of the enemy – he is beaten – Jesus is Lord.

How do we approach this open door?

“We do not have a High Priest who is unable to understand our liability to the assaults of temptation, but one who has been tempted in every respect as we are, yet without sinning. Let us then fearlessly and confidently and boldly draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in good time for every need”. (Heb 4:15-16)

“There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

We may enter heaven. We may come into God’s presence only through Jesus.

“Come up here, and I will show you what must take place in the future”
(Revelation 4:1).

“Come – the invitation is always – to come”

“I will show you”

“Ask and you will receive” (John 16:24)

“If anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all men liberally”
(James 1:5)

God is in charge

Want to know something?

Want guidance?

Jesus will show you – wait quietly, patiently and receive the answer when it comes.

“What must take place” – the future is certain – the timing is unknown. The events specified in the book will happen at some time. We have a responsibility to work for good, for God, but we must accept that God’s revelation is that the numbering identification system has come, the antichrist will come, the persecution will come. God’s warnings through nature will come.

An old (in age) stirrer friend of mine posed the question “If these things are decreed by God to happen, could we be seen as working against God? When we work for peace or object to identity cards, etc?” The answer seems clear enough. God sent prophets to warn even when He knew that the people would not listen.

Jeremiah was told that the people would fight against him but if he held out and held on to God, God would finally prevail (Jeremiah 1:19). He was not given the option of saying Well, it’s no use, we need to stand for God as He directs us but the ‘worry and care’ of it all is on God not us. We have a responsibility to obey/follow.

“At once I came under the Holy Spirit’s power, and lo, a throne stood in heaven, with One seated on the throne!” (Revelation 4:2).

What do you first see – the throne of God – you go direct to the place of power and authority – the place of judgment and mercy.

What do we first see – not the streets of gold, the angels’ wings, the music and joy, BUT the throne of God.

Who do we first see in this earthy life?

Who is seated upon the throne?

“One seated on the throne!”

God is seated upon the throne

- read the rest of the chapter.

It is not what is seated on the throne of our lives – It is not what occupies our thoughts here – it is not work, or self, or lust, or TV, or children, or church, or other needy people – it’s God.

Notice also that the following chapter shows that it is God not Satan who rules. He tried that once and was thrown out of Heaven. (Isaiah 14:12)

Note now the glorious description of our God and remember that these are only words and man's experience, trying to describe the ultimate, the indescribable.

Amplified Bible Revelation Chapter 4 verse 2 onwards:

John had entered through the "open door" of V1 and:

"Lo
A throne
stood in heaven
One seated on the throne!

He who sat there appeared like
- the crystalline brightness of jasper
- the fiery sardius,
Encircling the throne was a halo
that looked like a rainbow of emerald.

Twenty-four other thrones surrounded the throne
and seated at these thrones were twenty-four elders
arrayed in white clothing, with
crowns of gold upon their heads

Out from the throne came
- flashes of lightning
- rumbling
- peals of thunder

In front of the throne seven blazing torches burn the
sevenfold Spirit of God

In front of the throne what looks like a
- transparent sea of glass
- as if of crystal
Around the throne, in the centre at each side of the throne,
- four living ones,
full of eyes in front and behind
with intelligence as to what is before
and at the rear of them

and day and night they never stop saying,

Holy!
Holy!!
Holy!!!
Is the Lord Almighty
Who was!
Who is!
and who is to come!

The greatest praise that these living ones could issue was to shout God's Holiness. They lived closest to His throne and had intelligence as to what was around them and they praised God for His Holiness. Of all the attributes of God, the one that was dominant, that stood out, was His Holiness. Not His love, not His mercy but His Holiness.

"God is light and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). The week that I was reading this I was under intense temptation of the mind - I found that saying "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty" was a powerful defence. It wasn't long before the enemy withdrew. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:7).

What does the word 'Holy' mean?

"You are of purer eyes than to behold iniquity" (Heb 1:13). That surely was why God turned away from Jesus when He had my/your sins upon Him.

It is a mistake to preach the love of God without the Holiness of God. You end up weak and "wishy washy"... A church that is constantly taught the love of God and little else will end up so accepting of everything and everyone that it will stand for nothing and accept almost anything. God's most praiseworthy attitude is His Holiness. It was His love for us that sent Jesus our Lord Himself to this earth BUT it was His Holiness that put Him on the cross. Even though He loved us, He could not forgive us, His justice and Holiness could not allow His love of us to be dominant. His love for us caused Him to take our punishment but His Holiness could not be touched.

Greek: "Holy" - being separated from sin, unpolluted.

"They rest not day and night" (Revelation 4:8). His Holiness knows no break, no change, not for anything - do not fool yourself. God knows.

"The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne" (Revelation 4:10).

Who dares to stand before God?

When the Arc of the Covenant (symbol of God's presence) was put in the temple of Dagon and the idol kept falling over (1 Samuel 5:1-5). As far as I can detect, everyone who came into God's presence fell to their face before Him. If we have a real appreciation of God's character, of His holiness, we will say with Isaiah "Woe is me for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips". (The answer for Isaiah is the same for us - God cleansed him.)

This is a great mystery.

They cast their crowns before Him. All those years of gaining virtue and knowledge and wealth and ... we will cast them all before God. There seems to be indications in scripture that we will gain rewards (besides being in God's presence in Heaven) but what will we do with those rewards - lord it over others, be superior to others in Heaven? No. We will have the joy of casting all our rewards before God!!

Why not do it now?
Cast all talent, wealth, abilities, joys, sorrows
before God - Now!

Have a taste of the joy of Heaven now!
Cast our earthly crowns before God.

I need to remember that in everything I do, if I do it well, I can praise it as a crown before God. Not to win favour with God but to bring Him praise - to give up everything to God. I have always had problems committing myself to doing something - of being totally involved in what I am doing. The verse "do everything unto the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31) I found did not touch me. But to do something well and present it to God, well that begins to touch me. I repeat, we do this, not to buy anything from God or to gain favour with Him but more as a loved child brings something it has made or drawn or a flower it has picked, to its parent - because it wants to show love.

Throw our crowns before God.

What do the twenty-four elders cry out as they throw their crowns before God?

"Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive the Glory and the honour and dominion, for you created all things, by your will they were (brought into being) and were created". (Revelation 4:11)

God is in charge

The living ones praised God for His Holiness. The elders say that God is worthy to receive glory and honour because of what He did. His Holiness shows itself in actions and the action that makes Him worthy to receive Glory in His creating all things.

This follows on then to imply that what He created was holy and pure and lovely and that includes you and me. Pity it all got spoilt.

Note that it reads created not evolved – see Genesis Chapter 1 – “and God said ...”. Adaption is different to evolution.

Look at what God made and see His glory.

“The heavens declare the glory of God and the earth shows forth His handiwork”. (Psalm 19:1)

God is praised for His Holiness, worthy to receive glory because of His creation and in Chapter 5 verse 1, 5 and 12, the Lion who was a Lamb has conquered and deserves all power and riches and wisdom, because He was slain.

Holy - Creator - Saviour

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Revelation 5

V1 God is seated on the throne – He is in charge
He is in control

On His open hand was a book (cross reference Isaiah 29:11-12)
The book was closed and sealed
It had seven seals

V2 A strong angel announced in a loud voice
“Who is worthy to open the book?”
(‘worthy’ meaning deserving and morally fit)
“Who is worthy to break its seal?”

V3 A search was made of Heaven, earth and the dead – No one was
found worthy.

No one
Not you – Not I
Not Lucifer
No one

Our salvation can never be by our works or life. We are not
worthy – except... in Jesus
John was so upset that he wept bitterly.

BUT THEN

V5 The Lion of the tribe of Judah,
the source of David,
HAS WON!!
Has overcome and conquered!
He can open the scroll
and break its seven seals

V6 John is directed to look at Him
and what does He see?
A LAMB as though it had been slain ...

What a contradiction!
The one who had conquered
The only one worthy in all creation
was a weak and helpless lamb
and a dead lamb at that!

1 Cor 1:18

“The things that are despised, God has chosen”
“The weak things to confuse the wise”

Surely there are lessons there for us in our daily lives. Lessons for both our attitudes to ourselves and to others.

It is incredibly important to constantly keep in mind throughout all the horrors that are to follow that it is the slain lamb/the dead lamb that is now alive that lets them loose on the people of this earth.

Why is the lamb worthy to open the scroll and to unleash all this horror?

“You are worthy to take the scroll and to break the seals that are on it, FOR you were slain (sacrificed) and with your blood you purchased men unto God from every tribe and language and people and nation and you have made them a royal race and priests to our God, that they shall reign over the earth!” (Revelation 5:9-10)

The lamb was worthy because He had redeemed us!

He had paid for us

He had made a way of escape!

I used to become embarrassed by the old songs about the “blood” and wondered why they needed to dwell on it. Surely, I used to reason the resurrection is the glorious part - the cross was necessary and for Jesus our Lord to be separated from God (for my sins) was horrible in the extreme. But that was past. The present was the joy of the life of the resurrection. After all, Paul wrote “if Christ be not risen your faith is in vain and you are still in your sins” (1 Cor 15:17). So, I tended to pass over the cross (after accepting it as an historic fact that Jesus took my place).

I have been reading lately in my devotional that the Cross is the power of God and that once it is moved from the centre of our preaching then our preaching loses its power. (My Utmost for His highest, Oswald Chambers, Nov-Dec readings)

“If we get away from brooding on the tragedy of God upon the Cross in our preaching, it produces nothing. It does not convey the energy of God to man; it may be interesting but it has no power. But preach the Cross, and the energy of God is let loose. “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe”. “We preach Christ, crucified”. (1 Cor 1:21&23)

Chambers also writes of the difference between telling of what God has done in the cross and telling what God has done in me. Do we talk of the cross of Christ or of “my experience”?

These comments touched a chord in my spirit and I knew that he was right. About two years ago, David Pawson commented on a tale I heard that Jesus actually died of a physically broken heart – something to do with the order of blood and water coming when His side was pierced with a sword (John 19:34). It just about caused me to disintegrate to realise that my sins had caused Him such trauma that His heart had physically broken.

Some years ago, a friend became a Christian because he became aware of what Jesus had said/done for him – he said if He could go through that for me, then I can follow Him.

Paul wrote “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ Jesus our Lord” (Gal 6:14).

What do we glory in?
What do we boast of?
What is important to us?
What occupies our thoughts/our words?
When we have trouble or temptations
What do we turn to?

But let us go back a bit:

a) The Garden of Eden (Genesis 1&2)

Man and woman chose to do their own thing and this resulted in separation from God. Things that were pure now became impure because their thoughts and motives had changed, eg., naked and embarrassed before God. What did God do – he made clothes of animal skins – that means that animals died to cover their embarrassment. The innocent died to cover the guilty – and so the rule was set at the beginning.

b) The Passover in Egypt (Exodus 12:7)

The blood of the lamb was put on the door post of the houses and the Angel of Death passed over. The innocent died to save others.

c) The Ceremonial Law given to Moses (Exodus 1:3-4)

This law embodied the ritual of sacrificing a pure lamb to gain temporary forgiveness for the people’s sins. The innocent for the guilty.

d) The Crucifixion (1 Peter 3:18)

The final sacrifice – from Adam to Jesus. “for Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God.

All sacrifices have now ceased. Jesus the Christ, the innocent, was the fulfilment of all sacrifice. Hebrews 9:25-26, 28 clearly states that He suffered once and once only.

“Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall they appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb 9:28).

Sometimes we may imagine that it was a light affliction for Jesus to go to the cross. I would like to quote a few verses relating to Jesus’ feelings.

“My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death” (Mat 26:38).

“O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Mat 26:39). Do I have this attitude!

“He began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy” (Mark 14:33).

“And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly and his sweat was it were – great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:14).

and the most dreadful verse in scripture:

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mark 27:46).

Because “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5).

And Jesus now had darkness in Him
My darkness
Your darkness
So God and Jesus could no longer be one,

Why?
because “he took our sins
In His own body
On the tree” (1 Peter 2:24).

Why?
Because “With His stripes
We are healed” (Isaiah 53)
We are made whole

Why?
So that we may have
No darkness in us
And thereby be able to come unto God’s presence.

One of the most telling verses in scripture follows:

Jesus said “Father into thy hands I commend my spirit and having said this, He gave up the ghost” (Luke 23:46).

He still trusted God
God and He were now separated
But He trusted God
No matter what happens
Trust God!

What did Job say?
“even if He slays me
yet will I trust Him!” (Job 13:15)

We need to remember this when things seem to go wrong. Have you ever made a special effort in your Christian life, say getting up early to have your quiet time and then having a lousy day? What have you felt? “Well, thanks a lot, God?” and backed off or “Even if He slay me yet will I trust Him?” and persevered. We are meant to fight in the spiritual realm. I recently heard of a lady who was a Christian but every time she started to try and get close to God, problems started up in the family and she became frightened and backed off. We are meant to resist the devil, to fight with the weapons that God has given us, not to stay back from God because the enemy gives us trouble. Jesus Christ suffered the “trouble” of the cross, rather than back off from God’s purpose - look what that apparent defeat gained - IT WON THE BATTLE of eternity.

Matthew records that when Jesus died “the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose and came out of the graves after His resurrection” (Matt 27:52). Is it possible that we too, if we return to the cross and resurrection of our Lord, we will rise from our lethargy and live lives that show Christ Jesus lives, “because you believe others will know that I live”.

Jesus gave one simple instruction as to remembering His death. He gave the disciples bread and wine, the commonest daily foods and said “as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till He come” (1 Cor 11:26). AS OFTEN as you eat the common food of your situation, remember that Jesus died for you - every cup of tea, every biscuit, every cake, every breakfast, lunch and tea remember - try a new grace - “thank you Lord for dying for me”.

God, the Father was worthy to
receive glory and honour and
dominion because He created all
things

Revelation 4:11

Jesus was worthy to open the
scrolls because He died to
redeem us

Revelation 5:9

Recap of Chapter 5 so far:

God seated on the throne
Scroll lying on His hand
No one worthy to open the seal
John Weeps
One of the elders points out
The Lion of the tribe of Judah
Has overcome and can open the scrolls
John looks and sees
A lamb as if it had been slain

V6

The eyes of the Lamb are the sevenfold
Holy Spirit of God
The Three are all One here

The sevenfold Holy Spirit has been sent on
duty into all the earth
He sees all that happens
He is the eyes of Jesus
He is the spirit of God
God knows what is happening in this earth
and when the Lamb opens the seals
the time has come

God knows you and I

V7

The Lamb who is a Lion
took the scroll
from the hand of God
Not by force of might
but earned and thus
by right

V8

When He had taken the scroll
The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders
prostrated themselves before the Lamb

The ones that surrounded God's throne. The ones that are pictured as being closest physically to God worshipped the Lamb. Surely they would not be permitted to do that if the Lamb was a created being. Surely only God can be worshipped. "You shall worship The Lord your God and Him ONLY will you

serve” (Matt 4:10). Lucifer, a created being, tried by force to gain the worship that was due to God, but was rejected. “You were perfect in all your ways since the day you were created – till iniquity was found in you” (Ezekiel 28:15).

Again, in the initial temptation of Jesus in the desert “bow down and worship Me and I will give you all this” (the world for it is mine to give). Matt 4:9-11, 1 John 5:19

Each was holding:
a guitar or flute and
bowls full of incense

WHICH ARE THE PRAYERS OF GOD’S PEOPLE

Do you belong to God? Have you ever prayed? Did you read V8 of Revelation 5 – your prayer reached God. It is there as a fragrant perfume before the throne of God.

Formal times of prayer have always been a difficulty for me. seem to get restless and this area of my life troubles me. When I ask myself “what is prayer?”, the answer comes - communications - and I see that I do communicate with God. I have heard Him speak to me, I ask for guidance, I have sang and spoken praise to God, I try to be open to Him. Being conscious before Him is prayer – as is the special set apart time and the praying with others. To find someone of like mind to yourself and agreeing in prayer with them is a tremendous time of closeness to God and to each other.

The exciting thing about this section of Verse 8 is that our prayers of whatever category reach God and are a sweet smelling fragrance before Him. (Matt 18:19)

I opened my Bible this morning at Psalm 116 “I love the Lord, because He has heard and now hears my voice and my supplications, because He has inclined His ear to me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live” (Psalm 116:1-2).

I was so excited to read this because I had felt dissatisfied with my comments above. They needed to head somewhere. Psalm 116 gave me the answer - one’s response to God hearing our prayer is to love God in return AND TO CONTINUE TO COMMUNICATE WITH HIM.

V9 The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders sing a new song –

To the Lion/Lamb
“You are the worthy
take the scroll and break open its seals
because
You were slain and
with your blood

You purchased
people unto God (from every tribe...)

V10 You have made them a royal name
 And priests to our God
 and they shall reign over the earth

This would be an appropriate place to stop and read the Book of Ephesians – it tells us of our inheritance.

V11 Then John heard a huge number of voices – angels, the
 living creatures, the elders
 saying loudly:

“Deserving is the Lamb that was sacrificed, to receive all the

power
riches
wisdom
might
honour
majesty
glory
splendour
blessing

V13 they were joined by every created thing no matter what it was
or

whether it was living or dead – good or evil, Christian or non
Christian, crying out together:

“To him who is seated on the throne
and to the Lamb
be ascribed the

blessing
honour
majesty
glory
splendour
power

might
domain
through the eternities of the eternities!

V14

Then the four living ones said
“So be it”
and the elders prostrated themselves and worshipped
HIM WHO LIVES FOREVER AND EVER

May we do likewise
now,
willingly,
with ready joyful spirit, soul and body
before we are compelled to
along with all other created beings
when it is
too late

“Today is the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2).

“Arise from your sleep and Christ will give you life” (Eph 5:14).

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Revelation 5

In Revelation Chapter 5, we saw that Jesus was worthy to open the scroll because He had sacrificed himself to buy us back to God.

Because He had provided a way of escape then He is entitled to release the things that follow on to the world. The escape is there but, if people refuse the escape route provided, they choose to receive the consequences of their own actions. The rock of salvation is Jesus the Christ. If people choose to ignore Him, they will be crushed against the rock that would have saved them. They cannot blame God. They choose to ignore Christ Jesus so they take the natural consequences of their actions. But to those who choose Christ Jesus as their saviour, even if they suffer physical death, they have the strength of knowing who they are and where they are going.

In one of his tapes, comedian Mike Wonkie asserts that people cannot say that if God is a loving God, then there can be no place such as hell, because God showed His love by coming to this earth and making a way of salvations for us – The Cross of Jesus the Christ. If we choose not to come to God via the cross of Christ, then we choose separation from God.

Why did Jesus open the seals? Why did He release these things on the earth? We will see as we go through that the terrors that come upon the earth seem to be grouped into three types.

The first are Jesus breaking the seals and sending these things to warn people, to show them beyond any doubt that God is God. The objective being to make people see and turn back to God. The tragedy is that the opposite happened – they turned and cursed God.

The second group are that God lets Satan loose and he turns his hate and spite on both his own people and at times god allows him to persecute the Christians. The people of the world see him in his true colours and yet refuse to turn to God. It's rather like someone with a destructive habit – drink, drugs, etc. and even though they hate what it does to them, they cannot give it up and they still do not turn to God.

God is in charge

The third group of terrors to come upon the world is when it is too late and god sends punishment. Evil, self-will brings its own destruction. The magnificent thing to remember is that our God is in control and we need not fear even if we are to die rather than deny Christ Jesus our Lord.

I do not intend commenting on what the various symbols mean - there are many books to which one may turn for various interpretations of the horns, crows, monsters, etc. My purpose is to draw out what my God gives me as being immediately relevant for my day to day life.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Revelation 6

The LAMB breaks open the seals:

V1 First seal broken open – there came out:

V2 A white horse

- rider carried a bow
- a crown given to him
- a conqueror.

V3 Second seal broken open:

A flaming red horse

- a rider empowered to take peace from the earth
- men slaughtered each other
- rider given a huge sword.

V5 Third seal broken open:

A black horse

- rider had a pair of scales
- famine.

V7 Fourth seal broken open:

An ashy pale horse

- rider's name was Death
- the realm of the dead followed him closely
- given power over the fourth part of the earth
- to kill with war, famine, plagues and wild beasts.

V9 Fifth seal broken open:

The souls of those who had died, for sticking to the word of God and for the testimony they had borne, were revealed.

- V12 Sixth seal broken open:
- great earthquake
 - sun grew black
 - moon went red
 - massive number of objects from sky fell on earth
 - sky vanished
 - massive earthquakes affecting every mountain and island

The result of this enormous disruption to the physical world that is all that people have been taught to rely upon is destroyed or effected powerless. Effected maybe – to give them the chance to help others.

- V15 The powerful
rich
strong
and all people hid themselves

- V14 but they tried to hide in the very things that were unstable –
the physical earth, caves, mountains – the very things that were
moving.

All that people had trusted in is now proving to be unsuitable. That house that we worked so hard for, all the hours spent in the garden, the boat, the carpet, the job, the football –all gone– all of no value. What were the things we should have spent our main commitment of energy on? Building our families in Christ Jesus perhaps?

“The Rock that will not move”. (Matt 7:26 / 1 Cor 10:4)

BUT now in V15, the sixth seal, the one specifically mentioned. Power and wealth are of no use to us.

V16 “and they called to the mountains and the rocks - fall on or before us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne, and from the deep-seated indignation and wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of His retribution has come, and who is able to stand before it?”

They knew that it all came from God, they knew that Jesus was behind these terrors but, instead of repenting and turning to God, they try to hide. The futility of trying to hide from God, the absolute antagonism of man to God that even when he sees God's anger and power, he still will not give in to God.

Perhaps it's a case of
“there but for the grace of God go I”.

THE GRACE OF GOD

That freedom of God with which He reaches out and touches us and sets us free.

“You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you” (John 15:16,19) and

“You are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world; therefore the world hateth you” and “We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

and yet “All who will come may come” (Peter 3:9) the call is to each and every one of us.

V17 “Who is able to stand before it”.

Where are all the self-confident wise people who ridiculed Christians' belief, where are all the people who taught and practiced that “if it feels good, do it”? They are hiding from the God who did not exist (Roman 1&2). If Christians are still here then they will be subject to what is happening but they will be comforted by Jesus' words:

“Now I have told you this before it occurs so that when it does take place, you may believe and have faith in and rely on me” (John 14:29).

V6 A black horse:
“A measure of wheat for a denarius, and three measures of barley for a denarius. But you must not injure the oil and the wine”.

“The black horse and its rider represent famine, a famine which is very severe and causes great hardship, but which is not desperate enough to kill.

There is wheat – at a prohibitive price; and the wine and the oil are not affected.

It is not entirely abnormal that there should be wine and oil when there was no corn. The olive and the vine were much more deeply-rooted than the corn; and they could stand a drought which would wipe out the corn crop. But it is true that a situation in which wine and oil were plentiful and corn prohibitively dear would be the equivalent of one in which luxuries were plentiful and necessities scarce.

We can see the extent of the scarcity from the statement of the voice from amidst the four living creatures. A measure of wheat or three measures of barley was to cost a denarius. The measure was a choenix, equivalent to two pints and consistently defined in the ancient world as a man's ration for a day. A denarius was the equivalent of four pence and was a working man's wage for a day. Normally, one denarius bought anything from eight to sixteen measures of corn and three to four times as much barley.

So, then, this is a picture of famine set alongside luxury. There is always something radically wrong with a situation in which some have too much and others too little. This is always a sign that the society in which it occurs is hastening to its ruin.

“It is as if John was symbolically indicating that nature herself protests when the gifts she offers are used selfishly and irresponsibly for the luxury of a few at the expense of the many”. (William Barclay – Daily Study Bible)

In picture language, you cannot get much closer to God than the foot of the altar. These people had faced the test of whether to deny Jesus and retain physically life or to acknowledge that they belong to Jesus (the “Word of God”) and die – possibly in great physical anguish. They chose Jesus and look at the reality they gained - they were in the presence of God.

My feelings want to say a great deal about this but the words do not form in my mind – perhaps the Lord is saying that the wonder and excitement and truth of the few words in scripture stand for themselves.

They died rather than deny Jesus and they were in the presence of God!

Do we deny Jesus?

Do we deny Him -

In the little things?

In the times that we are quiet when we should speak

Or speak when we should be quiet

In the times when we should turn the TV off when the program is unsuitable

When we laugh at that sordid joke or

Don't walk away from that unfit conversation

Or when we criticise.

These are the times when, by our testimony, we say we do not know Jesus. Our actions, our conversation, our expression, our very lives show what or who is uppermost in our being.

The night before Jesus died, He told Peter that Satan

desired to have him but that He, Jesus, had prayed that Peter's faith would not fail (Luke 22:31-34). Satan desires to have each one of us and he tried to get us to deny our Lord. Peter (and all the other disciples as well) told Jesus that they would not deny Him but each of them did. Jesus also told Peter that when he was converted to strengthen his brethren.

There were three things that were going to happen that would change the disciples and enable them not to deny their Lord:

1. Jesus Christ was to die for our sins. His being separated from God for us, was free for us, was to free us from the bondage of sin. (John 3:16)
2. Jesus Christ being raised from the dead was to give us new life and destroy the power of death (Eph 1:20-22).
3. Jesus Christ sending the Holy Spirit was to give us power to stand (John 14:3/Eph/Acts).

After the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came, the same Peter who had three times denied that he ever knew Jesus, told a crowd of people about Him and 3,000 people gave their lives to Jesus. Peter went on to be killed rather than deny his Lord. He had a few failures along the way but he never stayed down.

The same three things are available to us. If we nail our sins, faults, cares on the cross of Christ and leave them there, if we are aware of the Holy Spirit within us and listen to Him and obey, we will not deny our Lord. Obey is our part – we must do it and we have no excuses for not doing so. All the power/strength has been given to us. Our attitude is essential. (John 14)

The Lord tells us that there will be people who say “I did this in your name” and Jesus will say “I will know you” (Matt 7:13).

Two very simple things we can do, to stop denying our Lord:

1. Ask God to give us one opportunity this day to acknowledge that you belong to Jesus. There are many ways in word or deed that we acknowledge or deny Jesus.
2. The tongue causes us a lot of problems. Ask God to “set a watch before my lips that I might not sin with my tongue”. (James/Psalm 39:1/ 1 Peter 3:10) If we do this, we will find that God will put a hesitation in our mouth when we are going to say something that is not of Him. It is up to us whether we obey or overrule that hesitation.

We can grow in our walk with the Lord and learn not to deny Him. God has given us the ammunition – we must use it. Our lives are our testimony. Another point that comes out of V9 is that the souls of these people are with God. They were not in an in-between state – they were in God’s presence.

V10 They were not, however, totally free from the cares of this world – yet – as they were still conscious of the need for the guilty to be punished “They cried with a loud voice, “O Sovereign, Lord, Holy and True, how long now before You will sit in judgement and avenge our blood upon those who dwell on the earth?”

V11 God’s answer to them was to remind them of:

1. their own salvation, and
2. the fact that in His own time, God will repay “vengeance belongs unto the Lord” (Rom 12:19). God has His own timescale and we must learn a massive lesson about time. It is a lesson that is totally about time. It is a lesson that is totally contrary to all the input that comes to us from the world. The world constantly tells us that “Now is the time” and that “if it feels good DO IT. “Turn the television on for an hour and you will get the message – try some of the children’s programs or the soap operas, reality shows, for a start.

3. their salvations –
“They were each given a long and flowing and festive white robe”
given - given not taken or bought by them
long - abundance
flowing - out to others
festive - a time of joy and celebrations
white - pure and clean
4. God’s timing – trust Him
“and told to rest and wait patiently a little while longer, until the number should be complete of their fellow servants and their brethren, who were to be killed as they themselves had been”.

Notice that God is in Total Control.

Always God is in control. Satan can only go as far, spiritually, as we allow him in our lives. Again see Jesus’ words on the night of the Last Supper.

There are several situations which seem to exist –

1. God says No to Satan
2. God gives Satan an area to move in
3. We can say No and God will back us or we can say Yes and take the consequences of our sins. Don’t blame God for this one.
4. God sends the trouble but is in control.

“Hither to shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall by proud waves be stayed” (Job 38:11).

The last point that is raised in this verse is that God has pre-allowed that some Christians will die, be murdered, rather than give up their faith in Jesus. God has allowed this. It may seem to the outsider that the Christian has lost when they hear of someone dying for their faith in Jesus. But God is in control and the Christian has simply left their earthly body and passed on to be with God. They have reached their/our ultimate goal.

This presents one of those parallel lines that run through scriptures. One view is that God protects and watches over us, eg. Psalm 91. A wonderful set of promises from God which commence with “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty ... surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler, ... you shalt not be afraid for the terror by night. There shall be no evil befall you... for He shall give his angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways”.

The other line is in Rev 6:7 that God's people have been and will continue to be killed or persecuted for their faith. Perhaps the connection is to do with "do not fear them that harm the body but after that there is nothing else they can do - rather fear Him who, after killing the body, has power o cast into Hell" (Matthew 10:28).

Our Lord is the classic example of this. Even the enemy acknowledged that God had instructed the angels to make sure (Matthew 4:6) that Jesus did not dash his foot against a stone - and yet He was murdered. Perhaps the connection for our Lord was "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as you will" (Mark 26:39).

I think that we can, in our day by day life, ask and expect God to watch over us, but we also should expect to be persecuted for belonging to Jesus (Matt 10:21). "The servant is not above his master - they persecuted Me, they will persecute you" (Luke 6:10). Job had the final word "even if He slay me, yet will I trust him" (Job 13:15).

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Revelation 7

It is as if God can hear us crying out: too much, too much, we can't hear any more, stop. So, between the 6th and 7th seal, He gives us a vision of reassurance, a confirmation of our final end.

to give us strength - Now

to give us courage - Now

to give us hope - Now

to help us go on and to trust Him today

The principle of looking ahead to our final goal during the day to day activities of our lives is well backed up by the bible.

“looking for the coming of God” (Peter 3:12,24)

“like an athlete I have my eyes fixed on the goal” (1 Cor 9:25)

“forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before” (Phil 3:13)

“looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus” (Jude 21)

“look unto me, and you are saved” (Is 45:22)

The classic is Peter asking Jesus to call Him to come to Him on the water - Jesus said “Come”, Peter did, he walked on the water - while he looked towards Jesus! (Matt 14:29) When he took his eyes off his goal, Jesus, and looked at the water, he began to sink. And so with us. When we keep our eyes on Jesus, we walk through trouble. But look at the trouble and we go under.

“Lord save me”

“and Jesus reached out ... “

(Matt 14:30, 31)

God is in charge

Between the 6th and 7th seal, God gives us comfort.

Let us see what this comfort is:

V1	God is in control	- angels holding back the wind - in control even of the so called natural forces
V2	God is in control	- instructions not to cause further devastation until -
V3	Salvation	- God's people are sealed - Our salvation is assured
V9	Our final position	- is certain "They stood before the throne and before the Lamb"
V9	Our final state	- is certain "they were attired in white robes"
V9	Our final joy	- is certain "with palm branches in their hands"
V10	Our final song	- is certain "in a loud voice they cried, saying Our salvation is due to our God Who is seated on the throne and to the Lamb".
V10	Who has done it	- Us? No - to God and the Lamb we owe our deliverance

These start with looking to God and finish with looking to God. In between, we remind ourselves of who we are and what we are.

We are reminded constantly that our salvation is due to God the Father and Jesus the Lamb. The Holy Spirit is quietly there in the background - the three functions of God.

Remember:

Rev 1:5 - "To Him who forever loves us and has once and for all loosed and freed us from our sins by His own blood".

Rev 5:9 - "You are worthy to take the scroll and to break the seals that are on it, for you were slain and with your blood, you purchased men unto God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

And now

Rev 7:10 - "Our salvation is due to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb - to them we owe our deliverance!"

To Them

To no one else

Never can a Christian believe that "there are many ways to God" (John 14:6). The Bible is very clear "I (Jesus) am the way, the truth and the light. No one comes to the Father but by me (Jesus)".

A Christian has no option - they must believe that all the others are wrong.

Notice that even though "the gate is narrow and few there be who enter thereby" (Matt 7:14), those few add up over the centuries to "a vast host which no one could count" (Revelation 7:9). God is very patient and waits till the wedding feast is full of guests. It is very comforting to know that often when we feel alone and isolated even from other Christians, that there are many who have not bowed their knee to the god of the day. Remember Elijah - he thought that he was the only one. God showed him that "I have reserved unto myself 7,000 who have not bowed their knee to Baal"(Kings 19:18).

V9 "Gathered out of every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages".

every tribe
every language

God is patient the full number will come.

Rom 1:19-20 tells us that, even those who did not know God's love, are justly condemned because what could be known of God is clearly visible in the things that God has made, and is in the inner consciousness of people. Perhaps the opposite is also true – some who have never heard the message of Jesus but have responded to the promptings of God and earnestly sought Him – perhaps He has shown Himself to them – met them in the quiet of the day. “Those that seek me early shall find me” (Prov 8:17). These all will be there.

V11 All heaven worshipped God.

We seldom have such an awareness of God's character that we worship Him. To worship something, we must hold it in awe and reverence, we must know – I was going to write that we must know that it is above us, but that it is not true. We can worship the most trivial things – home, sport, “I want to”, “I have the right”, the job or the new piece of furniture or friends or children or whatever motivates us. We can worship them all simply by our determination to have them and we maintain our concentration on them:

How did heaven worship God?

They fell before Him

- all their strength went out of them

- the presence of God was totally overwhelming and they worshipped God.

V12 Amen – so be it

Whatever you decree – so be it

What did they say?

What words do they use to describe?

the indescribable?

BLESSING (Amplified Bible V12 - selected)

glory (brightness, splendour)

majesty (greatness, dignity)

splendour (insight into the true nature of things)

wisdom (ability to discern the outcome of actions)

thanks (to give freely – to make acknowledgements)

honour (a valuing)

power (freedom of action)

might (inherent ability)

to our God throughout the eternity of the eternities...

So be it

V 13-17

Now follows one of the most tremendous sections in the scriptures – a section of comfort and strength – of finality – they are secure and free – they have arrived. Read it through:

“Who are these people?
Clothed in long white robes?
From where have they come?

Sir, you know

These are they who have come
out of the great tribulation

They have washed their robes
Made them white
In the blood of the Lamb
For this reason they are now
Before the very throne of God
and serve Him day and night.

He who is sitting upon the throne
Will protect and
shelter them with His presence
They shall hunger no more
Neither thirst any more
Neither shall the sun smite them
nor any scorching heat.

For the Lamb
Who is in the midst of the throne
Will be their shepherd
He will guide them
to the springs of the Waters of Life:
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

The Lamb, God, the people, together – forever. This section parallels Rev 21:3-4 and has long been heaven for me. Not the streets of gold, but God dwelling with us. As it was in the beginning – Adam and Eve walked with God in the cool of the day. (Gen 3:8)

I feel that I want to write and write and keep writing about the above but no words are there. The words cannot be added to – it either hits you or you miss it.

There is an end to tribulation.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Revelation 8

The seventh seal, so terrible that when it is broken open all eternity is silent. See the patience and love of God. He has warned and warned and called and died Himself. Now He slowly increases the severity of the warnings. Like a lovingly strong parent who continues to chastise a child who stubbornly persists in a deadly habit. The chastisement is not meant so much to punish but to show them, just a little, the consequences of continuing with that behaviour. The tragedy with this story is that human beings are so stubbornly determined to do their own thing.

In the events recorded in Chapter 7, God has given a message of “hang on” – “remember who you are and where you are going”. Now the Lamb opens the seventh seal. In the face of what is now going to be revealed, we need to remember the encouragement of Chapter 7 and not be discouraged.

V1 “When He, the Lamb, broke open the seventh seal, there was silence for about half an hour in heaven” - so deadly was this seal.

Silence

In the face of death what can you say. We attend a funeral and there is little to say. Heaven saw the seventh seal opened and what could they say. It had all been said. The warnings, the calling had all been made. All that remained was to face the terrors to come.

What happened

V2 Seven angels - given seven trumpets:

V3 An eighth angel - stood over the altar

He had a golden bowl and was given very much fragrant spices and gums. He was to mingle this with the prayers of all God's people upon the altar before the throne.

V4 The smell of the perfume “with the prayers of the people of God from the hand of the angel”, rose in the presence of God.

Once again, we are reassured that the prayers of us, God's people, reach God. They are on the altar before God. What type of things do you put on an altar? Precious things, perfect, unspotted things. I would regard my prayers as very faulty and

very spotted with selfishness and lust and laziness. But my prayers are precious and are before God. Those prayers are cleansed because they have been carried to God by the Holy Spirit who has taken the essence of what we are and has filtered them clean through the death of Jesus.

The smell of the perfume – what else could it be but the obedience and purity and death and resurrection of life of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our prayers are mixed with these things and carried to God. When we pray, No, when I pray, I need to remember that and it will make my prayers more real. My prayers, your prayers, are mixed with the rightness of Jesus and are before God. When we pray, try to picture in our minds that our prayers are mixed with Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

God is there – and our prayers reach Him!!

The next happening seems rather strange:

V5 “The angel took the censer
 filled it with fire
 from the altar
 and cast it upon the earth”.

The fire was from the altar. The altar in front of the throne. Remember when Isaiah saw the Lord he said “Woe is me for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips for mine eyes have seen the King, The Lord of Hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken ... from off the altar and he laid it upon my mouth, and said “Lo, this hath touched thy lips: and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged” (Isaiah 6 5-7).

Keeping in mind at this stage that God is sending these things to warn people and to show them that He is real and to show them the reality of being separated from Him. I suspect that the coals of fire of V5 were mixed with Christ Jesus' righteousness and our prayers for the intent of cleansing, and was the effect of Isaiah.

But why our prayers?

What do our prayers have to do with:

1. being mixed with Jesus' righteousness
2. being part of God's cleansing
3. being part of the devastation that comes on the earth.

When we pray for someone's salvation, we are really saying to God "Lord, you know what is needed to make them see the futility of living without you, bring them to this point even if it means leaving them to trouble in their lives to bring them to the end of themselves". Isn't this what is happening above.

So what happened when mixture of our prayers, the sweet smelling spices and the coals of fire were cast on to the earth?

V5 thunder peals
 Land rumbling and blasts
 Lightning flashes
 An earthquake

For starters?
Enough surely to make even the thickest person to think then

V6 The seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them.

V7 THE FIRST:
 - a storm of hail
 - fire
 - mingled with blood
 - was cast upon the earth

Resulting in:
- a third of the earth being buried
- a third of the trees being buried
- all of the green grass being buried.

V8 THE SECOND – something:
 - resembling a great mountain
 - blazing with fire
 - was hurled into the sea.

V9 Resulting in:
 - a third of the sea being turned to blood
 - a third of the living creatures in the sea perishing
 - a third of the ships being destroyed

- V10 THE THIRD - a huge star:
- fell from heaven
- burning like a torch
- it dropped on a third of the rivers and springs
- V11 Resulting in:
- a third of waters became bitter and poisonous
- many people died from using the water
- V12 THE FOURTH -
- a third of the daylight and of the night light being
withdrawn.
- V13 Have the people repented? Have they acknowledged
God? Have they seen that He is real and desired Him?
No! No! No!" a thousand million times they have said "No".
God sends another warning, one that must be seen to be not of
a "natural" cause:
"Woe, Woe, Woe
to those who dwell on the earth, because of the rest of the
trumpet blasts which the three angels are about to sound".
"A solitary eagle flying in mid heaven. As it flew, I heard it
crying with a loud voice:
"Woe, Woe, Woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the
rest of the trumpet blasts which the three angels are about to
sound"

CHAPTER TWENTY

Revelation 9

And so it continues

So far the people themselves have not been directly touched – indirectly from the bitter water and the destroyed shipping but not directly against their bodies. Sort of like the story of Job where Satan was trying to cause Job to curse God – He first gained permission to touch his possessions and family then he said – “If you but touch his person he will curse you” (Job 1:12), so God gave Satan permission to touch His body – Job said “even if He (God) slay me, yet will I trust Him!”

Even after nature has been so obviously effected, mankind does not repent and turn to God.

The time has come for mankind to be directly/physically touched. God does not reach out and harm His mankind himself but He releases some of Satan’s kind to do as they will. The purpose is twofold, at least:

1. So that we may see what the enemy is really like and what he does to his own
2. God really does still love mankind and wants them to come to Him and does not want to directly strike them so He lets the evil one do as he will, knowing that he will harm them. So often we put ourselves out of God’s path and then blame Him for the evil that touches us.

V1 THE FIFTH -

- “I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth”
- The angel was given the key of the shaft of the abyss.

V2 - He opened the long shaft.

I feel a reservation about dwelling on what came out. I am reminded of “whatsoever things are pure and holy, think on those things”. Verse 4 tells us a very exciting thing “they were told ... to only attack such human beings as do not have the seal of God on their foreheads”. There are some even in the midst of this who belong to God. We should never despair no matter how hard the situation we are in is because:

1. God has always kept some who belong to Him – there are always other Christians – we are not the only ones.
2. No matter how bad the situation, God knows where we are and looks upon us. Even if we are undergoing physical suffering we can know that God is with us.

The physical suffering is so bad and so unrelenting, such a taste of hell, such a taste of what the enemy does to those that follow him that people seek to die to

escape – BUT THERE IS NO ESCAPE is there? TURN TO GOD – at this stage. There is still time to repent, later there will be no room to turn, soon it will be TOO LATE (Revelation 9:5-6).

The bible does not tell us a lot about hell. It does not dwell greatly on the topic but could it be worse than this? I say “Yes” it could because I suspect that there they will see God and there will be no possibility of pretence and it will be too late.

There is a detailed description of the creatures. It may be in picture language describing something John had no experience of or it may be actually what they are. It does not matter, one day they will come. If we belong to God we need not fear – but what horror for those who do not belong.

“Over them as King. They have the angel of the abyss. In Heaven his name is Abaddon (destruction), but in Greek, he is called Apollyon (destroyer)” (Revelation 9:11).

The first warnings are over (Revelation 9:12). When you train children you gradually increase the warnings and the punishment until you either give up, or they realise that such behaviour is wrong or unacceptable, or they stop to avoid punishment. As this tragedy unfolds, we see that God does not give in and man – well, those that are determined to – to what? What are they hanging on to? What does God require of us that is so terrible, or demanding that we do not want it or we ignore Him or resort to all sorts of means to avoid Him. Even in some things when we are Christians.

If we go back to basics, we find that God created us. There are two reasons that I can discern. One is that God created us to have complete control over the earth and all animals, birds, fish, etc. (Gen 1: 26-31) We strive and are frustrated and angry because we cannot control our environment and yet we turn to anything but God. He made us to rule yet we do anything but rule and we do anything but go to God for help. The New Testament reinforces our destiny to be in control. The Lord Jesus Christ – the fullness of man – exercised control over the physical world, eg., the fish, the storm, sickness, the devil. He, Jesus, also gave us power to do the same. Such power is absolutely ours via the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus. “These signs shall follow them that believe in my name, in my name they shall ... cast out demons”. (Mark 4:36-41, Mark 1:32-34, Luke 5:4-11, Luke 8:22-25, Mark 16:17)

We do not have to lose. We do not have to give in. We can win. Why would people refuse to come to God when He wants us to win?

The second reason that God created us is shown by several verses:

“they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day” (Genesis 3:8)

“for God so loved the world that He gave His unique son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16)

“we love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19)

God created us to love us. Not as we so often hear so that we could love Him, but so that He could love us. God is not some megalomaniac that made all these little people so that they could run around telling Him how wonderful He is. God made us so that He could love us, and so that we could love Him in return.

Verse 20 tells us “they did not repent from worshipping the works of their own hands”. What did Lucifer want “I will ascent on high, I will be like the most high” – he wanted to be God. In the end those that reject God, they worship what they make, what they can control. (See tempted in the Garden of Eden). (Isaiah 14:13)

“I will” – they are like their master. So choosing to go his way and listen to his promises of self-determination, they become slaves and lose their kingdom. So is the deceitfulness of the enemy and of the human mind that accepts and clings to such things. (Revelation 9:20)

V13 THE SIXTH – A Voice from the altar:

- it instructed the sixth angel to

V14 - release the four angels who are bound

V15 - they are released to kill a third of mankind

There are several points that stand out in this section – V15 the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind”. There is no chance with God, no unforeseen happening, no surprises. God is in total control – He may allow us to go our own way and take the consequences but He always stays in ultimate control – to the very end. It is also frightening for those who do not know Jesus because it means that there is a time appointed when God will say – THE END – it’s too late to turn to Him.

The “third” that reoccurs has significance and I am sure that the scholars could tell us what it means. The thought that comes to mind is that God is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It was a third of this unity that we killed, that we rejected – it is a third of the world that is destroyed; that is rejected by God.

V16 The four angels had troops, 200,000,000 of them. It is possible that it is an earthly army that John saw and that God is using to achieve His

purpose – it does not matter in the end. It is also possible that John is describing some vehicle of war not yet invented or it could be that it is a demonic force that God allows out. Whatever it is, it will happen and God will release it. Make sure that you are on God's side.

V20 Here now is the great tragedy

How unbelievable that even when it is undeniable that God exists, mankind can be so ... so what? So determined, so stubborn, so hard. "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked – who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9) They knew that it was God because we are told that they did not repent but "cursed God" (Rev 16:21). So often we attribute things to 'mother nature' but it is God who is in control. God is the reality that we need to turn to in all our situations. I am not saying that God sends every hurt – but I am saying that God is in ultimate control. God has set laws of various kinds into place and we can go against them if we wish and take the consequences. Those consequences are that we see Satan as he really is and we experience his hatred for us. But instead of turning against him and back to God, we either pretend that neither exist or we say that "if God could let this happen to me, I don't want anything to do with him". Job's wife said to righteous Job "curse God and die" (Job 2:9) – as if that would solve anything. Job knew God better "even if He slay me yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15).

V20-21 "and the rest of humanity, who were not killed by these plagues, even then did not repent out of the worship of the works of their own hands, so as to cease paying homage to the demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor move. And they did not repent out of their murders or their practice of magic or their sexual vice or their thefts".

What is a god – anything that we fix our desires upon. Our homes, our children, our jobs, our looks, our TV, our religion, our religious habit – anything that makes us look at it and not at Jesus Christ, the Messiah. I have heard it said that even our prayer time and our bible study can be a habit and not something that flows freely from a desire to know God. All these things are things that we can control – "works of our own hands".

Verse 21 shows how clearly the Devil enslaves his people – they did not repent even when it led to their destruction. Do we have a habit of mind or appetite or whatever that is heading us to our destruction and we will not give up. I know someone who, at the moment, is destroying his marriage because of an absolute stubbornness of mind – yet he loves his wife and wants her to stay. The enemy promises freedom but delivers bondage.

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

Revelation 10

Six angels have sounded the trumpets. There is one more to come. Those left on the earth, except for the ones sealed by God, have not turned from their own ways. They have not turned to see that God loves them and wants to keep them from the destruction that Satan's 'freedom' brings on them.

There is an interlude now between the warnings God has been sending.

V1 "another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud and with a rainbow upon his head.

His face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire".

V2 "he had in his hand a little book - open:
he set his right foot upon the sea,
his left foot on the earth".

V3 "and cried with a loud voice
as when a lion roars.
Then -
seven thunders uttered their voices".

V4 John was about to write down what the seven thunders said but a voice from Heaven forbade him to write them down.

What can be said about what God has kept silent? Nothing - except to make sure that we are covered by the blood of Jesus. I find these seven thunders more terrifying than all that has happened before. There is no profit in speculating about what God has kept hidden. This holds true in all areas. If God gives us wisdom and understanding that is one thing but it is entirely different to spend "endless wonderings" about the many things that God has not revealed. I am sure that many errors have occurred in this way and that many have been led away from a clear vision of Christ Jesus by such speculations.

"Now we see through a glass darkly - but then face to face" (1 Cor 13:12).

V5 "The angel lifted up his hand to heaven

V6 and swore by Him that lives for ever and ever,
who created heaven,
and the things that are therein
and the earth
and the things that are therein

and the sea
and the things that are therein
that there should be time no longer”
(or that there should be no more delay)

It is finally about to be over. Over thousands of years, God has called and warned and wanted but now it is almost too late.

Verse 6 is a timely reminder that least we think that God is unfair, or why can't He just let them do what they wanted to. It is a reminder that GOD CREATED (Gen 1). HE MADE IT ALL. HE CAN PULL IT DOWN. If you make a sandcastle - you can jump on it - but someone else can't, else you will be angered. If you knit a jumper that has a flaw in it, what do you do? You unpull it and knit it again. Well, that is exactly what God is doing. He is unravelling His creation and making it anew.

Paul wrote about this attitude of man in questioning God (Rom 9:21). He talked about a potter making from the same piece of clay one pot as a toilet bowl and the other as a beautiful vase. He also states that the potter has the right to destroy what he made. There is one big difference between us and a vase. We are both made of the clay of the earth but the vase has no choice. God works in us to bring us to himself but “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom 10:13, Acts 2:21). He need not have planted the tree in the Garden of Eden but he did. He wanted us to choose Him, not because there was no other choice but because He loved us and wanted us to love Him in return.

“How can the thing made, say to Him that made it. Why did you make me like this?” (Rom 9:20). We are as we are at this moment and that is our starting place to go to God.

Verse 6 also brings forward the fact that God has waited a very long time for us to come to Him.

“that no more time should intervene and there should be no more waiting or delay” (Revelation 10:6 - Amplified Version).

A brief retrace of history:

- God created
- One 'do not' given so that we could freely choose God.
- Jesus Christ - the last sacrifice came
- God, his spoken word clothes in human flesh came and dwelt among us (John 1)
- He perfectly fulfilled the law
- He took our place and died, was separated from God for us

- The last sacrifice
- We come back to God through repentance, faith/trust in Jesus the Christ our Lord

CALL OUT TO HIM NOW WHILE YOU STILL HAVE TIME

It appears that when the seventh angel sounds his trumpet then God will reveal his plans to all – they will have no excuse, no pretence but it will be too late. There follows then only the wrath of God.

“There is nothing left for us then but a kind of awful and fearful expectation of divine judgment and the fury ... which will consume those who put themselves in opposition to God”. (Heb 10:27)

My bible has a heading above V7 which reads “The culmination of Divine Plans at Hand”.

“then God’s mystery
His secret design,
His hidden purpose,
as He had announced the glad tidings
to His servants the prophets
should be fulfilled”.
(Revelation 10:7 - Amp)

Ephesians 1:10 (Amplified Version) tells us:
“He planned for the maturity of the times and the climax of the ages to unify all things and head them up... in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth”.

God has repeatedly told us via the Old and New Testament that He would come, that we could be fulfilled in Him. He has also written it in our beings so that, even if we were never told, we would still know.

“For that which is known about God is evident to them and made plain in their inner consciousness, because God Himself has shown it to them. For ever since the creation of the world, His invisible nature and attributes, His eternal power and divinity, have been made clearly discernable in and through the things that have been made – God’s handiwork - so that men are altogether without any defence or justifications, because when they recognised Him as God, they did not honour and glorify Him as God”. (Rom 1:19-21)

This section goes on to repeat Revelation.

Rom 1, 9:22-26 reads “they did not repent out of the worship of the works of their own hands”. “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools ... and

changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man ... therefore God also gave them up ... they changed the truth of God into a lie and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever”.

Those who turn to God can gain fulfilment which results from that inner knowledge of God and of being united with God. I say “can” because we have it. We must live in that communion with God.

John is then told to “go and take” the little book which is open in the hand of the angel. He goes to the angel, says to him “Give me the little book”. The angel tells him to take it and eat it. He is told that it shall make the belly bitter, but shall be sweet in the mouth. John eats the book and it is as the angel says.

John is told to “go” and “take”. The angel does not go to John and give it to him. John has to move. I am reminded of a lesson that I learnt. I was not having much success finding the job I wanted. I have in mind a verse of scripture upon which I was relying “You shall hear a voice behind you saying “This is the way, walk you in it’. Well I was getting a bit desperate as nothing was happening. I ‘accidentally’ came across that very scripture and was mortified to read the full verse. “You shall hear a voice behind you saying this is the way, walk you in it WHEN YOU TURN TO THE RIGHT HAND OR TO THE LEFT” (Isaiah 30:31). I had to get up and get moving and then God would guide me. And He did - not the job I would have chosen but the one God wanted me to learn from.

There are times and situations, of course, when God would have us “be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10) or “be still and see the salvation of the Lord” (Ex 14:13). The Holy Spirit will tell us which way to go.

John did as he was told - he got up and went. He did not sit and wait for it all to come to him. He obeyed and went and asked and took and God was with him.

The angel gave him the book and with it gave him his next lot of instructions. As he obeyed one instruction, God gave him the next. John did not say “Oh Lord, the angel is so big, he is so awe-inspiring, he is ... I am so little ... I ... I..., give me a sign. “If it is you, tell me, show me a weakness in him”. No, John knew that it was God and he up and went and did as he was told.

John also did not need to see the whole situation. So often we hold back because we cannot see the full picture. We want God to show us the end of the matter - but He often will not. It is a lack of trust in God to want to see the end of the matter, the whole picture. God wants us to trust Him enough to take the one step that He has shown us. He knows what is ahead - surely that is enough. How many of us - as we look back over the past few years - would have been able to cope if we had known what was ahead? But one step at a time, we got there - and even if the way was rough, we can see God’s hand leading us and supporting us.

Often things that are sweet to our desires turn to bitter regret afterwards. The book was sweet in the mouth but bitter in the belly. Sometimes the process is reversed – bitter, difficult at first. God is faithful and even though the way He leads us seems bitter in the first instance – in the mouth – it turns to a peaceable relationship with Him – sweet in the belly.

The seven thunders – we do not know what they said. We do not know what was in the little book, but we do know that it was sweet, or seemed right and good to start with but proved to be bitterness in the living out. God has not revealed everything to us. Beware of those who go further than God has revealed. Trust God. Many teachings and happenings seem good and make sense at first, but turn out to be the devil’s copy. For that is the way he is and that is the way he works. Sensible, intelligent, scientific, logical, peaceable and “good” on the surface but once he or it has you, your stomach becomes very bitter.

Bitter - a sin enjoyed

Bitter - a doctrine that seemed right but was off centre

Bitter - a teaching which has robbed you of your peace

Bitter - a church which was/is religious rather than centred on Jesus and now you are bound in rules and regulations and musts

Bitter - a friend you trusted and put before Jesus in so many ways

Bitter - physical possessions that you worked for

Bitter - thoughts that filled your mind and kept it away from Jesus

Beware “lest any root of bitterness springs up trouble for you, and thereby may be defiled” (Heb 12:15).

I am sure that there are things in all our pasts and also in our present lives that cause a bitterness in us. We must take them immediately to God, ask forgiveness, see them nailed to the cross of Jesus Christ, be renewed and forgiven. Stop and do it now.

V11 “and he said unto me,
You must prophesy again before many people
and nations and tongues and kings”.

and he is still prophesying today. You are reading the Book of Revelation and the prophecy that God gave John. He was obedient and wrote down what he was told and we are blessed.

CHAPTER TWENTY TWO

Revelation 11

Before it is too late, God sends a final warning. One that is unmistakably God. People may pretend that all that has happened is from “Mother Nature” but this last one is not and they acknowledge God at the end of this time of reality. Acknowledge but do not repent! I will tell the whole story in my words and then comment on a couple of parts.

- V1 A measuring rod was given to John
 He was told to get up and measure
 the sanctuary, the altar
 and the number who worship there
- V2 He was told not to measure the court outside
 the sanctuary of God
 He was to omit that as it was given over to the ungodly
 The ungodly will have control over Jerusalem for three and
 one half years.
- V3 During this time God was going to send two witnesses.
 They would have the power of prophecy
 to speak forth God’s words for three and one half years
- V4 They would also have power to stop rain,
 to turn water into blood and to smite
 the earth with all manner of plagues,
 as often as they choose.
- V5 These two witnesses have been previously referred to as
 the two olive trees and the two lampstands
 which stand before the Lord of the Earth.
- V6 If, during these three and one half years
 anyone attempts to injure them,
 fire pours from their mouths and destroys their enemies.
 If anyone attempts to harm them, he will die by fire.
- V7 During this time they are telling people of the events which
 are happening that relate to Christ’s Kingdom and its speedy
 triumph.
- V8 But in God’s time, when there had been more than enough
 time for people to repent, God allows them to be defeated.

“When their evidence is all in”
the beast that comes up out of the abyss will wage war
on them and conquer them and kill them. - Amplified Version

V9 And their dead bodies will lie exposed in a public square in
Jerusalem.

V10 For three and one half days people from all over the world will
gaze at their dead bodies and will not allow them to be buried.

V11 There will be great celebrations and the people of the earth
will gloat and exult over them and rejoice exceedingly.

There will be public holidays declared.

People will send presents to each other because these two had
been such a vexation and torment to all the dwellers of the
earth. God’s warnings had been rejected.

V12 After three and one half days
God will breathe life into them again
and they will rise to their feet
The worlds rejoicing will turn to great dread and terror.

V13 A strong voice from Heaven called to the⁴ two witnesses
“come up here!” and before the very eyes of their enemies
they ascended into heaven in a cloud.

V14 At that very hour there was a tremendous earthquake and one
tenth of the city was destroyed. Seven thousand people
perished in the earthquake. Those still alive were filled with
dread and **THEY GLORIFIED THE GOD OF HEAVEN**
At last, they acknowledged God!!

At last, they said

“God is real – we can see God at work”.

“is there even then a space for repentance?”

The thief on the cross who saw in Jesus – God.

John is told to measure the church and to count the number
of people who are there. God is vitally aware of our church
services. He is there, he is interested, He is part of it. He knows
how many people are there and He rejoices over each one.
There is a number that will be saved.

Remember the story of the banquet that the king held for his son – and no one came – so the king continued to send out his servants until the hall was filled with people. The invitation was first to the Jews, then to all people and eventually it is those that God brings to himself that will be saved. This makes over feel very humble.

The fact that it will one day be too late is reinforced by the “strange” story of the ten wise and ten foolish virgins. Those that were ready entered heaven and those that were not ready were denied access when they wanted entrance. (Mark 25)

There is a time when it will appear that evil has won. This particular time is for three and one half years. There are many times in our lives when it seems that Christians have lost. We need to wait and commit it to the Lord. Wait, wait for God to work it out. The waiting is God’s timing – but if we trust God, we know that He will work it out. It may be dark for a while but we are guaranteed of final victory. Remember that Jesus has already conquered Satan. He is a defeated enemy.

If God wants us to do something He will give us the power to do it. We, of course, have to use the power we are given but it is there and it is sufficient for the job that we have been given.

“God will give us the desire and the power to do what He desires” (Phill 2:13).

These two (Verse 3) are the final call of God to mankind. For three and one half years they call upon people to repent and turn to God. But they do not. They show God’s reality and ultimate control of all things but still people resist and cling to themselves. It is a retelling of Moses and the King of Egypt – despite all the miracles and warnings the King did not turn from his own desires (Ex 7-12).

Even though God is in ultimate control and even He could just change a person’s will, He does not – He works in some to bring them to himself but others He leaves to the hardness of their own heart.

When their (the witnesses) work is finished, and not before, God allows them to be killed. So often it looks like Christians are defeated but God’s timing is always right. Jesus’ instruction “If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to them the left also” is to the outsider (and to a lot of Christians) a defeat BUT it is a sign of trusting in God (2 Cor 11:20). I recently learned that amazing lesson. A neighbour did something in a particularly disturbing and dishonest manner. It included a letter vilifying me. I wanted to fight and there were several courses open to me. But the more I prayed about it the more God said “if anyone strikes you on the right cheek turn to them the left also”. Eventually I obeyed and gave up plans to take action. The moment I obeyed, I felt such a burden of frustration, anger and resentment lifted off me. I marvelled. Turning the other cheek had the exact opposite effect to that which I had expected. I realised then that it was a matter of leaving God to deal with it – not for Him to take revenge but for Him to work it out in His time.

The Amplified Bible tells us In Verse 6 that their prophesying related to Christ's Kingdom and its speedy triumph. Notice that they preached the truth - the triumph of Christ's Kingdom when all around them, the opposite was the case. The whole world was following the enemy yet these two spoke the truth - Christ's Kingdom would triumph. How often is the world coming down around us and we talk defeat. I don't mean that we should pretend that the troubles are not there but that we should look through the troubles to God and see that He is there. He will win. Of that we are sure. When you see another Christian on a down, remind them that the victory is Christ's. Remind them of the verse "put on the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (Isaiah 61:3). Get them to say one thing that they can praise God for, once the word of God is in, God will use it to lift them up. If you are in the middle of a lot of trouble or depressed, it is hard to think these things but someone else can put that word in and God will use it. We, or they, may not initially appreciate the encouraging words and may snap at the other person but God will use the word once it is in. "If two walk together and one fall down the other will lift them up" (Ecc 4:10).

We need to get our realities right. What looks like defeat to man may not be defeat to God. If we are right with God, we can trust Him no matter what happens. Trust God. What did Job say - "even if He slay me yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15). When things go wrong, check out that we are okay with God - trust God. If we are not okay then get okay quickly - do that God tells us and trust Him.

Verse 8 finishes with a very telling statement:

"WHERE ALSO THEIR LORD WAS CRUCIFIED"

Jesus died for their sins, they died in obedience to God, doing what God had set them apart for. But see who they followed! Their Lord was crucified. They followed Jesus. He is the reality.

The response of the people was contrary to present earthly reactions. Normally when someone dies, even people who didn't like them stop talking about them. But not with these two! The conscious (the spirit) of the people was so guilty and the heard (will) so hard that instead of feeling guilt or compassion they felt only joy at the death of those two witnesses.

Truly God is merciful in persevering so long.
See the extent of their antagonism to God!

V9-10 "For three and a half days men from all races and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and will not allow them to be put in a tomb. Those who dwell on the earth will gloat and exult over them and rejoice exceedingly, taking their ease and sending presents (in congratulations) to

one another, because these two prophets had been such a vexation and trouble and torment to all the dwellers on the earth”.

Their hearts were so hard, so incredibly antagonistic to God that even the death of those they hated failed to bring a response. God even used the apparent defeat of these two witnesses as an opportunity for repentance. But the opposite occurred – they rejoiced in the removal of those that showed up their evil ways. What did Jesus say? “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin... but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father” (John 15:22-24). When we hold our light, our normal good lives up to compare them with Jesus’ life of absolute unity with God, we have no cloak of self-righteousness or delusion to pretend behind. I used to wonder about non-Christians who were nicer, more caring people than some Christians that I knew, including myself. This answers that query. When we all stand before Jesus, the judgement set of God, we will all, without Christ Jesus, be guilty. For three and one half days God waited and

THEN IT IS FINALLY TOO LATE

“THE HEATHEN RAGED, BUT YOUR WRATH (RETRIBUTION) CAME”

V18

After three and one half days God raised these two back to life and called them up to Heaven. Before the eyes of their enemies, They ascended into Heaven. Great dread and terror fell on those who watched them. You can imagine with satellite television, etc., that most of the world will be watching. Can you picture them standing in dread and waiting, knowing that the hurricane was coming. Possibly even finally realising that it was too late. They had gone too far. Remember the end of the movie ‘Gone with the Wind’? Where Scarlet finally realised who it was that she loved, it was too late to come back.

Today is the day of salvation (Heb 4:7). God will currently forgive us until “seventy times seven” (Matt 18:22) but one day it will be too late. When will you die?

There are some exciting things for Christians in V11 and 12.

1. Death is not the end. God is stronger than death.
2. The resurrection of all of us is played out in miniature here.
3. God called them up to Heaven – God will He call us?

BUT the two most exciting things that come out for me today are that:

- a) God can give me a second chance. He can raise me from spiritual death. Even if I have been spiritually dead for most of my life, God can raise me to life. If we are “backsliders” (not been walking with God as we should), God can revive us. A most wondrous promise in scripture promise in scripture is “I will restore unto you the years that the locusts have eaten” (Joel 2:25). We need to turn to God, acknowledge our “backsliding” and what caused it, plead forgiveness in Jesus’ death. We need to persevere until we gain an awareness of God’s peace with us and then go on in the renewed life that He gave us in Jesus.
- b) Verse 12 is an incredible assurance of salvation for God’s people. ‘COME UP HERE’. We are saved from God’s wrath – which was soon to be let loose. We are called to be in God’s presence. Salvation is real, it is today, it is us!!! As they ascended before the eyes of their enemies, so we are called to live out our lives as God’s people before the scrutiny of the non-Christians’ world. I guess these two witnesses could have said “please let us stay a little longer” – they may yet listen, but they did not, they obeyed God, they trusted God’s will and His timing and when God called, they went. We can say to God “let us continue in this and that for just a little while” or “I’ll just do this before I spend time in stillness before you”. Or, “I’ll go along with these people. I’ll listen to their jokes”, or “I’ll go to that place with them – I can be a witness to them in it”. I doubt it! How can light and darkness walk together. “God is a God of light and there is no darkness in Him at all” (1 John 1:5).
Ask Jesus to go with you and see how far you get.

“Come up here”

We, those that belong to Jesus, will all hear those three words one day. Either at death or when the Lord returns. What a glorious beginning to look forward to.

Their enemies saw them ascend to God and I daresay that one day those that have worked against believers and ridiculed the faith and done things that have caused us to turn the other cheek will see us with God and understand that we were right to stand and trust God.

A number of things happened to mark the end of the period of grace. ‘Grace’ meaning God’s forgiveness offered to us by virtue of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ.

- a tremendous earthquake that destroyed one tenth of Jerusalem.
- 7,000 people die in the earthquake

- those that remained were so filled with dread that they glorified the God of Heaven

AT LAST, when it was too late, they acknowledge that God is real. Maybe for the Jewish people, it is not too late – like the thief on the cross.

V14 “The second calamity has passed: now the third one is speedily to come”

V15 A great and fabulous time of praise is now heard from in heaven. Praise to God and His Christ. Listen to it in our eternal spirit:

- mighty voices in Heaven
- shouting
- the rule of the world has now come into the possession and become the Kingdom of our Lord
- and of His Christ
- The Messiah
- and He shall reign
- forever and ever
- for the eternities of the eternities!

Imagine how Heaven sounds now, when it is rejoicing over the sinner who comes to repentance – it did for us and will for others yet to come. (Luke 15:7)

V16 Further praise from the twenty-four elders:

- they left their own thrones and
- prostrated themselves before Gog
- and worshipped
- to you, we give thanks
- Lord God Omnipotent
- Who are
- and ever were
- for assuming the high sovereignty and
- the great power that are yours
- AND BEGINNING TO REIGN

Why the praise? because God is now about to take His proper place and reign as King. Up until now, God has allowed Satan to be Prince of this earth. He has allowed self to reign in our lives. But now God is going to reign.

You would think that after acknowledging God when the two witnesses were called to heaven that people would be glad.

Were they? No!

Listen to their response:

V18 “AND THE NATIONS RAGED
But your wrath
Your retribution came”.

What came?

“the time when the dead will be judged and to reward your servants, the prophets and saints and those who revere your name (us) both low and high - small and great - and the time for destroying the corrupters of the earth”.

Then the most magnificent thing happened. God threw off the covers and glory shone out.

V19 “THEN THE SANCTUARY OF GOD IN HEAVEN WAS THROWN OPEN”

and the ark of His covenant was seen
standing inside in His sanctuary
and there were
lightning flashes
loud rumblings
peals of thunder
earthquakes and
a terrific hailstorm”

Imagine the most spectacular fire cracker display you have ever seen, then imagine what John is trying to describe. Heaven opened and mankind was able to see it. Be part of it from the seat reserved for us personally - hear Jesus. Today is the day of salvation- then it will be too late.

“Too late” - the most tragic words in scripture.

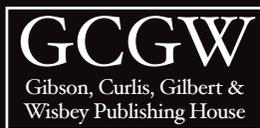
So ends the period of grace,

And so begins the period of wrath.

‘TODAY IS THE DAY OF SALVATION’
TODAY

Hebrews 4:7





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