

02-09-27b Revelation

We resume our study now in Revelation chapter 3, verse 2. Having reviewed each of the letters to the churches that we have studied thus far, you can see that each addresses a different aspect of life that can face us all. It is very common, very common, to find these seven letters addressed in historical terms. There are generally thought to be seven periods or seven divisions of church history, beginning with the early church, and that's represented by Ephesus, and then going through the early Catholic and Pope period with Smyrna, and then coming on down to the present.

You can read almost any commentary that will take the historic approach. I don't remember if I said this in the lesson or outside of it, but while I think you can take that approach with some interest, it's interesting to review the recorded history of the church. It is just that.

It's recorded, and it's man's record of history. It's the history that has come down to it. It's very selective.

It's very narrow. The great bulk of church history never gets written. The vast numbers of believers who have been faithful and who have meditated on the Word of God, who have learned it, who have lived by it, go unsung and unnoticed in each generation, and it will be in the annals of heaven that their record is written.

So I think it's a little bit chancy to base an analysis of history on this passage or vice versa. And if you think about it, it's far more pertinent to recognize that these seven churches and the letters to them are representative of problem areas in the lives of every believer in every generation, and particularly for us in our generation. So having looked at Ephesus and the possibility of going through the motions, having a great mechanism and a great organization, getting ourselves lined up and being very busy in doing things that are worth doing, and initially even having started out doing them for the right reason, and then losing the focus on the why and the wherefore, and continuing to do them as an expression of love for God and continuing to do them as an expression of genuine divine love toward fellow believers.

You can be doing the very same things. You can be one of those six men sitting in the pew, but why that five dollar bill hits the bottom of the plate is the real question. What are you trying to accomplish? What's going on in your soul? The Word of God is a critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and it is that in the hands of the Holy Spirit.

It is His sharp sword. So whether it is that situation in Ephesus, whether it is the testing phase, all of us go through testing times when it seems as though we are deprived and we are beset and we are hemmed about, and our protections seem to have fallen. We wind up finding ourselves thinking about Job from time to time and wondering when it's all going to end.

The exhortation to the church at Smyrna comes to life. In this world ye shall have tribulation. It's

the very same word that's used a couple of times in the letter to Smyrna, Philipsis.

Jesus promised it. He said, Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. Persevere, maintain until death, and you'll receive the crown of life.

You'll not be hurt by the second death. Pergamum, great time of testing for them in the days when it was a life and death matter. We have people today who are in danger of their lives, not so much in this country but around the world.

I was reading earlier this week about a Christian mission in a foreign country where terrorists came in and shot everyone in the place and killed them because they are Muslim militants and they don't like Christianity being in their country. It didn't hardly even make the news. You had to hunt around to find it, and yet these seven or eight people who worked in this Christian charity in an unmarked building doing nothing but trying to feed people who were hungry were all murdered, shot in the head, and carried out.

There are people who still suffer and die because they are Christians and because they are trying to do the work of the Lord. We've had missionaries around the world kidnapped and killed. We've had people, and again, many of them are unknown and unsung.

They die for their faith and it never makes the press. And the letter to Pergamum is an encouragement. It says, you held fast.

You did not fall away even when it was a matter of life and death. But now you've got some there who hold to the teachings of Balaam who taught Israel to sin. And you've got some of the Nicolaitans.

And you've got people who, even though they went through that trial by fire, now that the pressure is off, now that the storm has passed, in the aftermath, pride goeth before a fall, a haughty spirit before a stumble. And sometimes right after we weather a great storm, right after we pass a great test, in the eddy and the backwash afterward, we're vulnerable and susceptible and we get distracted and deflected. And so the letter to Pergamum is a warning about that.

In Thyatira, they're growing. They're one of the strongest churches and the most commended churches in the list of seven. Their latter works are better than the first.

But they have gone sort of in the opposite direction of emphasis. Instead of losing their first love, they've overemphasized love to the point that they're no longer discriminating doctrinal error. And they have forgiven the woman Jezebel, who is teaching damnable heresies within the church.

But in the spirit of love and forgiveness, they have not eradicated her. They haven't expunged her. They haven't practiced the doctrine of separation in her case.

And Jesus brings that to their attention. He says, you've got to hold fast to your doctrinal truths.

You've got to hold fast to the elements of the faith that define Christianity.

You can't let it be eroded away by amalgamation and by syncretism and by combining outside things. And today, there are tremendous inroads in the Christian faith being made with all the right vocabulary and all the best of motives. But it is a combination of Eastern mysticism and psychology and counseling and drug use that there are Christian counselors who will take your kids under their wing and put them on Ritalin and drug them until they're grown.

And it's done in the name of the church. And it's done in the name of Christianity. It's justified on the basis of the Bible.

All of us who live here in Dallas can name two or three Christian counseling centers that are huge purveyors of chemical solutions to problems. And you have to be careful. There is a place for medicine.

And there is a place for science and the advances that have been made by technology. The Lord knows that all of us have benefited from the knowledge that has been gained in how to repair the human body and how to help it repair itself. But when it comes to the soul and when it comes to the mind, we have to respect what the Word of God claims for itself.

And it says that the man of God who is schooled in the Scriptures will be thoroughly furnished, completely equipped for every good work. It is the power of the Spirit and it is the power of the Word that transforms the human soul. There is no human contingent in that strength.

It is a matter of holding fast what we have. Those who do so, those who pass that test, will be given authority over the nations and will be given that wonderful reward of the morning star. So I guess I feel this evening that we have the need, having gone through these five letters, to step back just a little bit and look at what Jesus is saying, at why He put these letters at the beginning of the Revelation.

Because as you go forward in this book, at Revelation 4.1 He says, Come up here and I will show you things that must come to pass. And the church is absent for the next 16 chapters in Revelation. Why do we have that? Because Revelation chapter 1, chapter 2 and chapter 3 is what equips us and what tells us what we need to know in the present.

Jesus says, I am He who is and who was and who is to come. Well, we have He who was in all of the preceding 65 books of the Bible. And we have much of what we need to know to live this life in the latter portion of the New Testament and in those first three chapters of Revelation.

And then what is to come is given in the remainder of Revelation. And then we have some closing exhortations. But these seven letters are the final words of the Lord Jesus Christ to each one of us.

And there is a pertinence and there is an applicability of each one of these situations to us. We

have seen that the history of each town reflected the nature of the crisis and the nature of the challenge that faced the church. And that the imagery that Jesus uses and the recollection that he draws upon for the citizens of these towns, whether it is Smyrna with their phoenix-like resurrection out of their own ashes associated with myrrh, the burial spice.

Whether it is Ephesus or Pergamum or Thyatira. We have seen that these towns had a history that is reflected in the imagery. It was pertinent.

It was relevant. It struck a chord in the hearts of people who knew the history of their town. Ephesus had its location moved two or three times.

And Jesus said, If you don't change your mind, I will remove your lampstand out of its place. So we should find that same kind of chord being struck in our soul. We know what it is like to do something so long that it begins to lose its meaning.

There used to be a thing they did back when I was in grade school where they were talking about what can happen when you engage in endless repetition. You can repeat something so much that it loses its meaning. And so they would give us a word, and you would say that word, and you would keep saying it over and over.

This happens to me sometimes. I'm editing sermon transcripts for a lot of my day, each and every day. And if someone is repeating a word over and over, pretty soon I begin to doubt, when I look at it, that the spelling is right.

It begins to look like a foreign word because the repetition dulls my sense of it. And you can think about a word. I begin to see English as a foreign language sometimes.

You think about the word put. It means to put or to place, P-U-T. If you sit and stare at that word long enough, it begins to look like a Hawaiian word or a Japanese word or some other kind.

You think, P-U-T, put, put. You can imagine some foreign person walking up and saying, put. And you think, what, put? How can anybody assign meaning to such a strange... And it comes by repetition.

And in Ephesus they repeated their good works. They had the machine finely honed. Everything was in its place and it began to lose its meaning.

It began to lose the why and the wherefore. That happens to us. Being oppressed and feeling like there's no end.

It happens to us. Holding fast and then failing in the aftermath. Happens to us.

Excelling and moving on and on and yet failing in some detail. Failing to... Being so engaged in the love and good works that we're not discriminating anymore. That can happen to us.

And so now we find ourselves back in Sardis, the fifth church. They have a name that they are alive, but they are dead. Be watchful, he says, verse 2. Gregoreo.

That's the first use of that verb. So we've got a life and death situation, but it's different than the life and death that we saw in Smyrna. That was more of a literal life and death, of physical life.

This is spiritual life. Spiritual life in the sense of productivity. When he says you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead, it doesn't mean they are spiritually dead, lost in their sins, hellbound, unforgiven, uncleansed, unredeemed.

They are believers, but this is... And we could do... I thought about stopping and doing the doctrine of death, the seven different kinds of death that are mentioned in Scripture, but you know what these are. We don't need to do a doctrine on it. Abraham is spoken of as being dead.

He was sexually dead. He wasn't supposed to be able to father children. Sarah's womb was dead.

She wasn't supposed to be able to have a child, and yet God quickened them so that they could have a child. We know about physical death. We know about spiritual death.

We know about death in the sense of production, and that's the sense that's used here. You're a tree that has branches but no fruit. The olive tree that Jesus encountered outside Jerusalem.

He came up to it looking for fruit. I'm sorry, it wasn't an olive tree. It was a fig tree.

He went up to the fig tree looking for figs, and there weren't any there. And he said, I want you to look like you are. And he cursed the fig tree, and the next morning it was withered up and dead.

It was already dead. It just didn't look dead. And when Jesus cursed the fig tree, he made its outside appearance match its lack of productivity.

It was dead in the sense of unfruitfulness. That's the use we have here. I know your works.

You have a name, a reputation, onoma in Greek, that you are alive but you are dead. This happens a lot. There are people patting themselves on the back.

There are churches and denominations and believers looking at each other, having big mutual admiration societies saying, Oh no, you're the greatest. Oh no, you're the most. Oh no, you've done so much.

And all of this hail fellow well met, and we give each other a reputation that we're alive and we're dead. Be watchful, he says. Gregoreo.

This means be alert. You've got to be discriminating and discerning. You have to look.

You don't post a guy on the wall and say, Well, just stay awake. He's got to be looking over the wall. He's got to know the difference between a shrub and an approaching soldier.

He has to know the landscape well enough to say, You know what? There's a shrub there that wasn't there before. That's some guy in a, what do they call those things? Not a dilly suit. What's the kind of suit that a sniper wears? Ghillie.

I think it's a ghillie suit. It's that big thing that looks like burlap rags and things. I think it's called a ghillie suit.

But those guys can creep up. We had a demonstration when I was at the basic school where they put us up in the bleachers and there was a great field out there. We're at Quantico, Virginia.

And they said, We're going to show you a sniper demonstration pretty soon and they're sneaking up on you right now. So feel free to let us know if you spot them. And so we sat there and for about 20 minutes they lectured us on everything that the snipers do and showed us the rifle and all of us meantime were peering over their shoulders trying to spot the guys.

Never saw a thing. And at the 20-minute mark the guy said, Well, so how many of you saw the snipers? And of course nobody did. And they said, Okay, you guys stand up.

And 15 guys stood up that were no more than 50 yards from us with their rifles in their hand and their ghillie suits and we never spotted them. They crept up on us and we did not see them. A watchman has got to be able to see the approaching enemy.

He has to know the landscape well enough to know that something's... You know the cartoons where the guy gets in a hollow stump and creeps up and creeps up and creeps up and nobody notices? You have to know the landscape. Gregoreo, watch. Be alert.

Notice the changes. Notice the differences. Don't let somebody heat you up like a frog in a skillet and slowly warm the water.

You've got to be alert and be watchful. The inroads that are being made in the church today by secular psychology, by secular marketing, by packaging the church and packaging Christ and packaging Christianity so that it will be appealing. Guys that wear shirts with no collars and have a casual praise and worship service and show films and have drums and guitars and all of that.

Not that there's anything intrinsically wrong with any one of those things, but it is part of a marketing scheme. It is designed to attract people with a style, with a look, with the externals and with the form of things. The Lord Jesus Christ doesn't need flypaper.

He doesn't need bait. He doesn't need to lure people in and then switch the coolness and the hipness for the message of the gospel. The problem is when people do that, they've got those people in and they can't afford to lose them by talking about sin.

So you hear a gospel that doesn't say anything about sin. It says, Oh, come to Jesus because He'll help you with your problems and He's a wonderful friend. Look at the wonderful warm fellowship you'll have here.

Look at our activities. What happened to sin? What happened to righteousness? What happened to judgment? What happened to the message of the cross that says you are hopeless and helpless and useless and you are a hell-bound sinner until you claim the grace of God in Christ? What happened to the challenge and the upward call of God in Christ Jesus that says you need to look at your life. You need to judge yourself lest you be judged.

There is a judgment coming and it's incumbent on us. We have a responsibility to God to change and to grow and to learn. Not to have some kind of a smarmy praise song service week after week after week.

But the water has slowly turned up. People have drifted away. Ask a church.

Go to one of these churches and say, What's your stand on the inerrancy of the Bible? What's your stand on the infallibility of divine inspiration of the Bible? And you'll be surprised at the answers you get. Well, we believe that it is a witness to the truth. We believe that... Well, what do you think about the creation story? What do you think about Jonah and the great fish? What do you think about the walls of Jericho? Well, you know, we don't really focus so much on the Old Testament.

We're a New Testament church. And what they're really saying is they don't believe in the inerrant, infallible Word of God anymore. And it is a rot in seminaries and in Bible colleges and in the minds of people who serve as pastors, who attempt to be pastors, and who are more interested in... They would be better off going to club manager school or resort management school than seminary because they don't believe in the power of Scripture.

They don't understand the ministry of God's Holy Spirit. And they don't understand the plan and purpose of God for believers in this age. And it's been a slow change.

It's been a gradual change. And it blends with our culture. And it's politically correct.

And it's nice. And it's inclusive. And everybody feels good when they leave.

But look at what Jesus says. He says, be watchful. You've got to be on your guard.

It's not popular to be on your guard. You can hear the President trying to say, we need homeland security. We need to be on our guard.

And people are saying, oh, but what about the labor union? What about making sure that everybody pays their dues and the President can't prevent a strike? What if the homeland defense people all go on strike right around the time that some big thing is about to happen?

Because the union knows that they've got us over a barrel and nobody's going to compromise national defense. The President says, look... I don't normally talk about politics, but it really bothers me that this thing they're arguing over is a new thing. The President already has the ability to... They're adding in this labor rights thing.

That's not a part of federal employee rights now. They want the homeland defense people to be different than the rest of the federal employees. Federal employees don't strike.

Military people don't strike. But the portion of our Congress wants the homeland defense federal employees to be able to strike and to pay money into the labor unions. And, of course, the unions are all for it because you think about the amount of money to be paid to these people.

And if you've ever paid union dues, which I did for two months, you know how much money they're going to make. And what is it? Instead of being watchful and alert and recognizing that there's a threat and we need to be Gregoreo, they're squabbling over silly things and things involving money and things involving influence and things involving the upcoming election instead of the necessity of defending our nation. Well, Gregoreo, be watchful.

Strengthen the things which remain. You still have the Word of God in your soul. You still have the ever-present ministry of God the Holy Spirit.

Strengthen those. Call them to mind. Rehearse them.

Bring them back up to the surface. They're ready to die. You're about to perish utterly in terms of your spiritual life and your spiritual growth.

But everybody has seen a little plant that went too long without water and it withers and its little branches fall down over the edge of the pot. But there's a little bit of green. You snap off the dead and there's a little bit of green down.

And you say, you know, if I water this, if I clip it back, if I work with it, put in some of those plant spikes or whatever, try giving it water occasionally, it grows back up. I have killed many a plant, especially before I got married. And you can watch them and you feel bad, but Jesus says strengthen the things that remain.

There's still a little bit of life. If you snap down far enough on the branch, there's still some green in there. So prune it back.

Get rid of the dead foliage and nurture it. Help it grow. Strengthen the things that are ready to die.

I have not found your works full, pleroma, before my God. And this is enopion, before the face of. These things happen before the face of God.

None of this is done in a corner. Nothing is hidden from Him with whom we have to do.

Everything is open and in the full light of day.

He sees and He knows. We can shine each other on. We can put up a false front, but not God.

Remember, nemenuo, therefore, how you have received and heard. Hold fast. Take those living things that remain and hang on to them.

Nurture them. Strengthen them. Therefore, if you will not gregoreo, remember that we had that up in verse 2, be watchful.

If you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief. Why does Jesus compare Himself to a thief? Well, we have the standard thing, thieves come unexpectedly. Well, lots of things come unexpectedly.

I get a pain in my back unexpectedly. Lots of things happen that you are not looking for. I saw a car wreck right in front of me yesterday.

Three lanes of traffic and I was in the right lane. Some lady was in the center lane and some lady was in the left lane. Only supposed to turn left out of the left lane.

Lady in the center lane decided to turn left and the lady in the left lane ran right into her. Big crunch right there in front of me. Totally unexpected.

Why does Jesus compare Himself to a thief? Everything about a thief is negative. For example, take a look at Matthew 26, verse 55. Matthew 26, verse 55.

Jesus is being arrested. And the crowd comes up. Judas betrays Him with a kiss.

And in that hour, Jesus said to the multitudes, Have you come out as against a robber, as against a thief, with swords and clubs to take me? What is He saying? When people identified a thief and recognized who the thief was, caught him with the goods or whatever, how did they treat him? They came out against him with swords and clubs. Well, more about this verse in a moment. But look at John 10, verse 10.

We're trying to get the biblical idea of a thief. People come out against a thief with swords and clubs. In John 10, verse 10, Jesus says, The thief does not come except to steal and to kill and to destroy.

John 10, verse 10a. The thief does not come except to steal and to kill and to destroy. The same Jesus who wrote these seven letters said those words in John 10, verse 10.

So, we already saw Ephesians 5, verse 14. Awake, O sleeper, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you life. Written in the closing section of a letter to a church full of believers.

Awake, O sleeper, arise from the dead. This is the non-productivity, the non-spiritual fruit kind of

death. Matthew, chapter 24, verse 42 and following, Jesus is talking about the second coming.

And you'll remember two men will be in the field, one will be taken in the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill, one will be taken in the other left. And then verse 42, you know what he says? Gregoreo, watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.

But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you did not expect. You also be ready.

It's from the verb *etoimadzo*, to be prepared, be watching, be ready. But here Jesus compares himself to the thief that comes in the night. You have the same idea expressed by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5, 2 through 4. You yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

For when they say peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them. The day of the Lord comes like a thief and brings with it destruction, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman, and they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness.

1 Thessalonians 5, 4. You, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this day should overtake you as a thief. A thief comes and takes away stuff that you want. That is the essence of being a thief.

That's what a thief does. He takes away stuff that you want, that you desire, that you sincerely wish to have. The thief comes and takes it away.

Takes it away suddenly, takes it away without warning, leaves you with a sense of loss, leaves you with a sense of violation, leaves you wishing that you had been more prepared, that you had known the hour that he was coming so that you could have prevented that loss. Right? Paul says the day of the Lord is going to come like a thief. People are going to suffer loss.

Look at 2 Peter 3, 10. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat. Both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

It is a loss. If your investment is in the works that exist on this earth, you're going to lose them. The day of the Lord is going to come like a thief, and everything that is a part of this earth, that is earthly and not heavenly, is going to be burned up.

Therefore, he says in verse 11, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness? Notice, he doesn't say what manner of works ought you to perform. He says what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and in godliness? It's attitude, it's thinking. He says in verse 12, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God.

Nevertheless, in verse 13, we, according to his promise, are looking for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. It's possible for us to have those possessions that transcend the expiration of this earth and this universe and the creation of the new. Well, Revelation chapter 16 and verse 15, Jesus says, Behold, I am coming as a thief.

Blessed is he who gregoireos. Blessed is he who watches and keeps his garments. What are the garments? Robes of righteousness.

White robe, robe of righteousness. If you keep your garments, you're keeping your righteousness. Where does righteousness come from? The entire book of Romans is devoted to the theme of righteousness by faith.

We're not righteousness by works, that was the mistake Israel made, we're righteousness by faith. What we do is done in faith, motivated by hope and outworking of love. I am coming as a thief.

Blessed is he who watches, gregoireo, and keeps his garments. Guess what the word is for keeps here? Tereo, to keep or guard. Otherwise, he'll walk naked and they will see his shame.

Blessed is he who watches and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame. Is there the possibility of shame? Is there the possibility of embarrassment at the judgment? Jesus says, yes, there is. You have got to... Now notice, our salvation does not depend on gregoireo.

Our salvation does not depend on tereo. But whether or not we have any clothing at the judgment, does. You know, someone who is saved yet so as by fire, if they catch fire, what happens? Clothes get burned off.

Lest he walk naked and they see his shame. Well, what is the message here? Jesus says in Matthew 26.55, as we already saw, when they come to arrest him, he says, Have you come out against me with swords and clubs like a thief? That same saying of Jesus is repeated in Mark 14.48 and it's repeated in Luke 22.52. Three different attestations of that specific saying of the Lord Jesus. Anytime you see something repeated, especially thrice repeated, it is very important.

Jesus answered and said to them, Have you come out as against a thief with swords and clubs to take me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching and you did not seize me. But the scriptures must be fulfilled. There is a great irony.

There is a reason why there is a threefold testimony of Jesus saying, Have you come out against me as a thief? Because they are right. He is coming like a thief. And he is going to take the righteousness by which they think they are protecting and defending the reputation of God and the word of God and that they are fulfilling righteousness, the righteousness of the Pharisees and the righteousness of their religious structure.

They think that this is a holy war, that they are getting rid of a heretic and a blasphemer, someone who claims equality with God and claims to have lived before Abraham and is a bad person according to their standards. And so they are coming out to do the right thing, to preserve and protect and defend their religion. And there is a huge irony because Jesus is the thief that is going to take away this false wood, hay and stubble righteousness, this false standard that Paul talks about in Romans chapter 10.

He talks about Israel in Romans 9, 10 and 11. He talks about how they forsook the righteousness of God that comes by faith and they sought to establish their own. And when we manufacture a false righteousness, it is going to be taken from us.

How does that apply in Sardis? Well, there is a conflict here or a contrast. If you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments and they shall walk with me in white for they are worthy.

This makes sense in the light of these other passages, doesn't it? The garments of righteousness, they remember righteousness by faith. They are living by the Word of God and the guidance of the Spirit of God. They are the ones who remain, strengthen the things that remain.

There are a few who still understand how to walk the Christian walk and live the Christian life. They are doing things for the right reasons, to glorify the right person. They remember the why and the wherefore.

So Jesus continues in verse 5, He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments. He is not going to be the Revelation 16.15 naked guy who loses his garment. He will be clothed in white garments and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life.

Now, what is the story on the Book of Life? Because this sounds an awful lot like the Book of Salvation. We generally assume that the Book of Life means the Book of Eternal Life. That you have to be written in the Book of Life or you are not saved and you are going to be tossed into the lake of fire.

So what would it mean when Jesus promises to not blot out his name from the Book of Life? But, I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. Well, in the Bible we learn a lot just by letting Scripture interpret Scripture. And many times we find that the contrast that is set up within a verse or within a statement like this tells us.

We understand one extreme and it illuminates and helps us understand the other. So, something about blotting out the name from the Book of Life is the opposite of having your name confessed before the Father and before his angels. These would be opposites.

They would be alternatives. It is one or the other. You are either going to have your name

confessed or you are going to have your name blotted out.

Those would at least be two extremes. Maybe there is some middle ground where your name is not blotted out but it is not confessed either. He does not address that.

But these would be at two extremes. That seems reasonable. Someone who has his name blotted out is certainly not going to have it confessed before the Father and vice versa.

So, this would be something that takes place for believers before the throne of the Father. You either have your name confessed before the Father or it is blotted out of the book and it is not mentioned before the Father. You remember Jesus used this same language when he talked to the disciples.

He said, If you confess me before men, I will confess you before my Father who is in heaven. And it is a reward for faithfulness. Faithfulness under pressure.

Faithfulness when the going is rough. When your life is in danger. If you confess me before men, I will confess you before my Father.

We talked about that. Confess is not just a verbal confession or a verbal testimony. It is living your life as a believer.

Sticking to the truth of the word of God and the light and the guidance of God the Holy Spirit regardless of what people say, regardless of what people think, regardless of the outcome. Sometimes the outcome in this life is not necessarily good. You can do the right thing and it costs you.

It costs you dearly in some cases. For some it costs them their life. Never can forget Polycarp who for the lack of saying two words was burned alive at the stake because he would not say, Kurios Kaisar, Caesar is Lord.

He would only say, Kurios Iesu, Jesus is Lord. And for those two words he lost his life. Confess my name before men, I will confess your name before my Father.

Here he says, If you overcome you will be clothed in white garments. Your name is not blotted out of the book of life. Instead your name is confessed before the Father and before the angels.

Why would your name be confessed before the angels? What are the angels doing when they look at human history? They are learning about God and they are learning about faith and they are learning about righteousness. And believe it or not, angels can learn from watching you and from watching me. Hopefully from watching believers who do not compromise, who do not fall away, who do not defile their garments, who do not besmirch their righteousness with an admixture of human effort and human motivation and human celebrity ship.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. You remember in Luke chapter 15 we looked at the story of the prodigal son? In Luke 15.24 the Father says, Bring the fatted calf here and kill it and let us eat and be merry. Why? Luke 15.24 For this my son was dead and is alive again.

He was lost and is found. And they began to be merry. Then you remember the brother that stayed behind begins to grumble and complain.

And when you go down to verse 32, the brother says, This son of yours came, he has devoured your livelihood with harlots. You killed the fatted calf for him. The father says, Son, you are always with me and all that I have is yours.

It was right that we should make merry and be glad for your brother was dead and is alive again and was lost and is found. He never ceased to live physically. He never ceased to be the father's son.

This life and death are in terms of relationship. It's in terms of productive association and of harmony and like-mindedness with the Father. And that's what we can return to.

That's what the church at Sardis is being called to. You've gone off slopping the hogs. Come back.

Watch. Be diligent. Strengthen the things that remain.

Get your white garments back on. Don't defile them. And you'll walk with me in white.

You'll have a white garment. I'll confess your name before the Father. Why would Jesus cite someone's name to the Father? Because they did what they were supposed to do.

They exhibited faith. They were declared righteous. And their garments are not soiled.

What does it mean to have your name blotted out of the book of life? The book of life here is the book of the righteous. And this is not just my conclusion. Even my commentaries talk about the fact that this book is a heavenly record of those who are considered righteous or worthy.

It's the same book of Luke 10, verse 20. Do not rejoice that the spirits are subject to you. Remember when the disciples came back? Rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.

You followed your instructions. You went out and preached. You shook the dust off your sandals.

You cast out the demons. You did what I asked you to do. You were faithful and obedient.

Your names are recorded in heaven as in the roster of righteousness. That's what the book of life is. Philippians chapter 4, verse 3. True companion, I ask you to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel together with Clement also and the rest of my

fellow workers whose names are in the book of life.

Paul says, my fellow workers who have been faithful, their names are in the book of life. Why would he say that if it just means salvation? It means they've been faithful. They have not sullied their garments.

They're going to walk with the Lord in white.