

02-10-18b Revelation

Let's resume our study now in Revelation chapter 3 and verse 11. Behold, I am coming suddenly. Of course, there's some question about the behold.

If you have a new American standard, I think they leave it out. But the point is that the return of the Lord is unknown in terms of timing. As far as each individual believer in this age is concerned.

And it flows very smoothly along with everything else the Lord Jesus has said to the first five churches that these promises not only pertain to the original audience who received them, but to each generation of believers all through this age. And all of us are subject to testing, to perazzo. It was the Lord Jesus himself was tested in all points like as we are.

The very inception of his ministry, he was in the wilderness for 40 days. Perazzo'd by the devil. And we've studied in the past the nature of those temptations and the reflection of areas of testing that we ourselves face.

And the Lord knows what it is like to be tested the way we are because he received that same sort of testing in spades. And in some cases, we have testing that may be ongoing throughout our life. And in other cases, a test may sufficiently make its point and accomplish its learning objective and demonstrate that we have reached a point of growth and maturity.

And God says, I'm giving you the open door that you can step through and I will keep you from further testing in that area. The rest of the world will continue to be tested in that hour of trial. But you are going to walk through the door and you get to skip what's coming on everyone else.

And it's a promise to hear a specific group of believers who had fulfilled a specific type of requirement in a specific set of circumstances. And it was in this, what was it? We can say it was specific, but what exactly was it? What was unique about the Philadelphia situation? They were persecuted by the synagogue of Satan, but they had very limited options. They had little ability to do anything about their situation.

They didn't have, and we have all felt this. There is a test you can call the hand-in test. I am beset on all sides.

I'm like the Marines in Korea. I could advance in any direction because I'm surrounded. I just don't have anywhere to turn.

I don't have a remedy. I don't have a way out. And it's been this way for a period of time.

Many of us can think back on significant periods of testing. It was ongoing. It had a duration and it was seemingly endless.

And we really didn't see any light at the end of the tunnel. We had no idea how much longer it

might last. And then suddenly God says the bell has rung.

The time is up and that test is over. Your grade is in and you can walk through the open door. And there may be others who are going to continue to go through testing, but in your particular case, that particular test, you're all done.

You can move on to other things. But having done so and having persevered, sometimes it is the pressure that keeps us focused. The church historically has done better in times of persecution than it has in times of prosperity.

The persecuted church seems to thrive and recognize its roots and treasure the presence of God and the grace of God and the resources that God has given us in the person of His Spirit and in the text of His Word. We, you know, under pressure, you decide what's really important to you. And then when the pressure is off, the testing has gone away, sometimes we become distractible.

So the challenge is, God says, the open door is here. You're exempt from further testing, but you'd better hang on to what you have achieved during that testing. Don't let it slip away just because the testing has ended.

I am coming unexpectedly, Jesus says. Hold fast what you have. How did they get what they have? How did they get what they have? Within their circumstances, right? In the place where they live.

They didn't make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to get what they have. They didn't make a pilgrimage to Rome to get what they have. They got what they have right where they are in this hand-in testing.

They gathered. They had fellowship. They spoke truth to one another in love.

By the way, we need to go take a look at that verse one of these days. We're not going to do it tonight, but I have a few things to say about the verse I quote so often. Speaking the truth in love.

You know that the verb I quoted in the English, but the word for speaking is not in the original. It doesn't have any verbosity to it whatsoever. There's no word there for laleo or any of the rest of it.

It doesn't actually mean speak, but we can't do everything all at once. That's like one of those Yogi Berra sayings. History is, or time is what keeps everything from happening all at once.

Something like that. How did they get what they have? They got it through testing. If the testing leaves, are they going to shift gears? Are they going to change priorities? Are they going to shift in their values and their goals? Are they going to do something different once the testing is over? Jesus cautions them.

He says, be careful. Hold fast. Don't lose the crown that you have gained in this tribulation, in this time of testing.

You've done well, but because the test is gone, you can, you know, what does it say? Pride goes before a fall and a lifted up spirit before destruction. It says haughty, but the word means lifted up. And you can be lifted up.

You can be kind of giddy. You can be self-congratulatory. You can be relieved.

You can be buoyant over the cessation of pressure. And the Bible says, be careful when you feel buoyant and when you feel giddy and when you feel lifted up. Because a lifted up spirit is what precedes destruction.

Lifting up of one kind can be replaced by lifting up of another kind. And we studied that in connection with the pig that was lifted up. It lifted itself up and God snaps it off and says, I'll drive in my own pig.

No one can snap off. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar. Each of these letters concludes with this idea of ha-nikon.

It takes us four or five syllables and three words to say what the Greek says in two words and three syllables. Ha-nikon, the one who overcomes. It's a noun.

The one who overcomes. Well, how do we become an overcomer? What is this crown that we want to hang on to? And as promised, we're going to take a quick look at some of the crowns that are mentioned in Scripture. 1 Corinthians 9 verse 25 talks about the fact that crowns come to those who compete, to those who exert themselves.

Paul says to the Corinthians, everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. And the word for compete there is agonizo, agonizomai. We saw that here just recently.

All those who compete exercise self-control. And this is from krateo, the same word that we have when he says hold fast. Those who compete control themselves in all things.

They keep a grip. Egkrateo is what we have here, which is from enkrateo. It means to have krateo on the inside.

Egkrateo, they do it to receive a perishable crown, but we, an imperishable. So here is Paul, like John, who is quoting the Lord Jesus, tying krateo, that supervisory ruling power, or master something and keep it mastered, subdue something and keep it subdued. Get something under control and keep it under control so that you can obtain an imperishable crown.

Paul says, therefore I run thus, not with uncertainty, thus I fight, not as one who beats the air. I discipline my body and bring it into subjection. And the word for subjection there has the same

root as doulos.

It's doulogogo is what it says. And it's from doulos. I make it a slave.

I make my body a slave, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. Now think about disqualified. You see a receiver go out for a pass.

He's running down the sidelines. He runs 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55 yards. Here comes the ball.

He catches it. He runs into the end zone and the crowd is cheering, but the referees are blowing the whistle and waving it back, waving it back, waving it back. Why? He did what receivers are supposed to do.

He caught the long bomb. He ran into the end zone. Why are the referees blowing it back? He stepped out of bounds before he ever caught the ball.

He was trying to get around his defender. He stepped on the white line. He's out of bounds.

He did everything right, but he disqualified himself by stepping off the field. And you cannot step off the field and come back in and make a play. It's one of the rules.

It doesn't mean he's not on the team. It doesn't mean that he didn't catch the pass. It means that he disqualified himself.

He was an eligible receiver. He was running down. Everything was fine until he stepped out of bounds.

And once he stepped out of bounds, he's no longer an eligible receiver. We can have and possess progress and growth, and we can be accumulating spiritual treasures in the heavenly places. We can be accumulating an inheritance.

But what does the scripture say over and over again? You have need of endurance. You have need of patience. Peter says, after you have suffered a while.

Paul says, it is those who by faith and patience inherit the promise. God is not interested in a flash in the pan. We talked on the break about the parable of the soils.

Jesus said, some of the seed falls into shallow soil, and that seed springs right up. You've got a stalk. You've got branches.

It looks healthy. It's green. Everything is fine, but its roots are not very deep.

And as the sun continues to beat on it, it can't get any moisture. The surface layer of the soil dries out, and it has no ability to sustain itself over time. And it withers and disappears.

And it is as though it was never there. This happens in spiritual life, and Jesus taught the parable

to illustrate spiritual life. We do not want to be a one-day wonder.

We don't want to be a brief plant that doesn't last long enough to produce fruit. We don't want to be someone who was on the road and was in the books as being fruitful, and then we disqualify ourselves. We do not run with uncertainty.

We do not fight as one who beats the air. Paul says, I discipline my body. I bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Paul says, Look, I'm an apostle. I've preached the gospel. I've written these inspired books, letters.

And guess what? If I don't keep myself under subjection, if I don't discipline my body, I could disqualify myself. I could lose my crowns. I could lose my progress.

I could lose my inheritance. I could wind up inheriting the smoke of the lake of fire outside the gates of the New Jerusalem. And he goes on to talk about that in chapter 10 of 1 Corinthians.

But that is the idea of the crown. Crowns are won in competition. Agonesimai.

You are pushing against resistance. You're striving. And the figure there is not so much emphasizing competition against others as putting one's best effort forth.

You are competing against yourself. You're competing against the clock. You're pushing for the duration of that race to put in your personal best.

In 2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 5, again, Paul is talking and uses very similar language, talking to Timothy. Also, if anyone competes as an athlete, if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. So many people are going to say, Lord, Lord, in your name, did we not... and then fill in the blank.

Did we not give? Did we not pray? Did we not worship? Did we not fellowship? Did we not strive? Did we not minister? Did we not put ourselves out on behalf of others in so many different ways? Lord, did we not compete? He says, sure, you competed, but not according to the rules. You stepped out of bounds. Doesn't matter how many passes you catch.

Doesn't matter how many yards you run. You step out of bounds, you're disqualified. And all the crying in the world, all of the replays, but look at my stride.

Look at my style. Look at how I reach down. And the most heartbreaking thing in football is to see a guy kill himself to catch a pass that's just almost out of reach.

And it's like he's got glue on two fingers and he one-hands the ball and scoops it in and manages to drag his feet and get both of them inbounds in the end zone. But they've run the film back and

he stepped out of bounds way back on the 35-yard line and it's all for naught. It's heartbreaking.

It's tragic. Game-winning touchdown called back. That is the hazard.

If anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. We have to know the rules. Paul goes on in 2 Timothy, down in verse 8 and following.

He says, Remember, Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains. But the word of God is not chained. Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

There's a lot we could say about that because there's a lot more in view than saving lost people. The elect are those of Romans 8, 28 who recognize their calling, who pursue their calling. And salvation is a lot more than avoiding the lake of fire.

It is deliverance. It's fruitfulness. It's abiding in the vine.

It is the will of my Father that you bear much fruit, Jesus said. That is life in the vine. And competing according to the rules is essential to win the prize.

We've had examples in the recent Olympics where someone had their medal taken away because there was a chemical found in their body. They took a steroid they weren't supposed to take. Not competing according to the rules.

A few pages forward in 2 Timothy, in chapter 4 and verse 8, Paul is talking about his struggles and his diligence as an apostle. And he tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 4, 5, he says, You, Timothy, be sober in all things. And that word sober means have self-control.

Have your mind firmly gripping your emotions. Endure hardship. Do the work of an evangelist.

Do the work of a good news broadcaster. Fulfill your ministry. Not everyone has an evangelism ministry.

Timothy did. Whatever your ministry is, fulfill it. Whatever your opportunities are, fulfill them.

They may be very limited, like Philadelphia. But even in Philadelphia, they had the ability to grow. They had the ability to be faithful to the name and to keep the word of Christ's patience.

And that's what they did. They said, Well, I don't have the opportunity to witness and build and minister and clothe the naked and all the other things, but I can be patient day by day by day. I cannot let a root of bitterness spring up.

I cannot be frustrated. I cannot be angry. I cannot dry up and wither.

I can sink my roots deep. I can be like the tree planted by the river of water. And I can bear fruit when my season comes.

And if it's not my season for visible fruit, then I'll just sit here and soak up the water and I'll grow and get strong. Do the work. Fulfill your ministry.

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course.

I have kept the faith. Notice, he doesn't say, I have felt really good. I've sung a lot of praise songs.

I've clapped and shouted and spoken in tongues. I've sowed my seed and reaped the reward of the windows of heaven. How does Paul measure a life that is effective in the service of Christ? He doesn't say a lot about what we typically see around us in Christianity today.

We see an awful lot of emotion. We see an awful lot of people working for an experience. Experiential Christianity.

I'm spiritual because I feel spiritual. I'm close to God because I'm made to feel close to God through these contortions and gymnastics. He says, I fought a fight.

Fights are romanticized in the media, but anybody that's actually fought a fight, it hurts. It hurts a lot. Fighting is no fun.

If you've ever been in a fist fight, it's painful. I've been in a few fist fights and it hurts. It hurt a lot.

It's real discouraging, especially you can get hit in places that discourage you so much you want to quit fighting. Paul says, I fought and I kept on fighting and I didn't just beat the air. I landed some blows and some blows were landed on me.

I do not fight like one that's just shadow boxing. I wasn't, you know how people go skiing and they buy all the ski clothes and they get the fancy equipment and then they just pose. You know, they stand on the slopes and people take pictures and they're not really skiers.

They're posers. The French put a U in there, something like poseur. They're like fake things.

They look great, but they can't actually do anything. A lot of people drive, you know, the big craze for SUVs and four-wheel off-road vehicles, but you see people going back and forth to work in them every day. They're not out there climbing hills and they don't live in North Dakota going through the snow banks.

People that buy these \$35,000, \$40,000 SUVs with a winch on the front and all of these locking hubs and all of that. What do they do? They're driving up and down Oak Street in the middle of Illinois somewhere. There are people in Michigan that wear cowboy hats and people that claim

things that don't pertain.

Paul says, I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course. I ran a long race and I didn't quit.

I didn't sit down and rest under the shade of the trees. I kept putting one foot in front of the other. I love to watch those programs about the people that run these marathons and something happens, the old guy that was wheeling his crippled son and he ran this marathon and he and his son had always had this dream and his son was in a wheelchair.

So he ran the whole marathon and he was an old guy. He was 50 something and he pushed his 20 something year old son in his wheelchair and that wheel came off the wheelchair and he started getting a game leg and all kinds of bad things and it got dark and everybody else had finished the race and the guy just kept on pounding, kept on going. He got another wheel.

They sent off. Somebody drove and got a wheel for the wheelchair and he was like 12 hours. They closed the thing.

He wasn't even an official finishing guy but there was a little group of people that were still waiting because they knew he was coming and like after midnight, it's like 1.30 in the morning, all the official finishing records people had packed up and gone home but the guy finished. He finished the race. That's what Paul says here.

I have finished the course. I have kept the faith. I said I was going to start.

I said I was going to finish and that's what I did. Because of that, and it's important to understand that level of commitment, look at verse 8. In the future, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge will award to me on that day and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. I find it very significant what is placed in parallel here.

What does it mean to love the Lord's appearing? It means to fight a good fight, to finish the course, to keep the faith, the crown of righteousness. People say, oh well, I love the Lord's appearing so I'm going to get the crown of righteousness. If you love the Lord's appearing, you will fight the good fight and when you get socked in the nose and it hurts, you'll keep on fighting the good fight.

When you get a good solid punch in the solar plexus and your wind gets knocked out, you're going to keep on fighting. When you run and your feet hurt and your knees ache and your muscles start tightening up and you get the old lactic acid burn in your muscles and your cardiovascular stops vasculating and you feel like every cell in your body is screaming out to quit, you will keep on running the race. Endurance is not just a word and it's not just an ideal.

It means you've got to gut it out. I learned more than I wanted to about endurance when I rather

foolishly participated in crew at the Naval Academy. You know, eight oared shells and that kind of thing and I was in as good a shape as I ever was or will be at that time I had done other things.

I had roommates who were doing crew so I went down there and I rode with the lightweight varsity crew for a year. You cannot believe the physical training that goes into that and I often found myself in a position of my body and my brain finding all kinds of ways to rationalize quitting. It is painful.

It hurts a lot, not just a little bit, a lot. It is compellingly painful. It is motivatingly painful.

It makes you actively want to stop. It's your survival instincts start saying what are you doing? Is anything worth this level of discomfort? But if you're in a shell and there are seven other oarsmen and a coxswain and the coach in a motorboat and he says, okay, this is the sprint and he takes the stroke rate up to 40 strokes a minute, there is no stopping. You can't stop.

What are you going to do? Stop the boat, stop seven other guys and the whole, you cannot stop. You must endure. You must finish and it doesn't matter how bad your lungs are burning or how bad your muscles are screaming or how much skin left your hands 20 minutes ago.

You have to keep going and you have to finish and you find out that you can. There's not a person on this earth that cannot do more than they think they can do. You learn that when you are put to the test and you're forced by circumstances beyond your control to run farther and jump higher and last longer and stay afloat or whatever it is that you're called upon to do.

People find it out in extreme situations. Philadelphian believers were in an extreme situation and they found out that they could endure because of the grace that God gave them. They had limited ability but they kept the word of Christ's patience.

Notice that there is a theme that runs through this. These crowns don't come easily. They don't come by clapping and singing praise songs.

They don't come by going down to the stadium and cheering and getting all motivated. They come in the grind. They come in the hard places of life and it is endurance when others will not endure.

It's Caleb and Joshua against the other two million in Israel type of endurance. In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness. My point here is loving his appearing is the motivation.

That's what Paul had his eyes on. How was Paul able to complete the race? How was Paul able to keep fighting the fight? You think about Paul. I mean how many times have we reviewed his career of beatings and stonings and shipwrecks and all of the other horrible things he went through because he was preaching the good news of Jesus Christ.

You think about the Apostle Paul that the Lord Jesus is going to give him the crown of righteousness. That crown means something. It means we can't feel sorry for ourselves.

We can't wallow in self-pity. We can't be diverted. We can't be deflected.

We can't be distracted. And in this country and in this day and age we have so little by way of genuine pressure. We're not being killed.

We're not being burned at the stake. We're not having our family members dragged away and executed. Our pressures are of the mental kind.

Our pressures are those that are after the open door has been put before us. I think the American church in our generation was given the open door. We had people who suffered persecution in Europe.

We had people who suffered persecution in this country in the early days of its existence. And God gave the church an open door. And now we have no religious persecution in this country.

For believers who are just wanting to study the word of God. Where is the fear? Where are the camps? Where are the guns and the oppression and the imprisonment and the executions? We have none in this country. We are at that latter stage hold fast to what you have so that you don't lose your crown.

And yet it's so easy for us to be distracted and deflected and have an eye on our own short-term earthly goals. What lifts our eyes beyond the immediate and what lifts our eyes beyond our own myopic microscopic world? Loving His appearing. Why does Jesus say I'm coming suddenly? That's His appearing, right? He says pay attention.

I'm coming suddenly. If you're thinking about my appearing you'll be thinking about the right things. You'll continue to hold fast to your crown.

So that's what we get from 2nd Timothy chapter 2 verse 5 and chapter 4 verse 8. James talks about and we're beginning to see something by way of a consistent sort of associated ideas with the crown. Look at James 1 12. Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial.

In the New King James it says blessed is the man who endures temptation. You know what the word here is? You want to take a guess on what the Greek word is? Perazzo. Blessed is the man who endures.

Hupomone. Remember? You have kept the word of my patience. The word of my hupomone.

James, half brother of the Lord says blessed is the man who hupomones perazzo. For when he has been approved this is dokimas. Remember when Paul says lest I be disqualified? That's dokimas.

Same word here. When he has been qualified, when he's been approved, when he has been stated that he's not disqualified, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to who? To those who love him. Crown of righteousness to all those who love his appearing who will fight the good fight and run the race.

Crown of life has been promised by the Lord to those who love him. Finally, take a look at 1 Peter 5 in verse 3. Peter is talking to shepherds. He says shepherd the flock of God among you exercising oversight not under compulsion but voluntarily according to the will of God not for sordid gain but with eagerness nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge but proving to be examples to the flock.

And when the chief shepherd appears you will receive the unfading crown of glory. Now this sounds like well be a good pastor and you'll get the crown of glory. We'll go back up a verse to chapter 5 verse 1. Therefore I exhort the elders among you as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed.

So what is he mentioning there in verse 1? It is the pathematon of Christ. We get pathos or pathetic from this Greek word pathos which is translated here sufferings of Christ. He says I am a witness and a partaker in those sufferings and in the glory that follows.

So he says I can tell you from my own experience that if you will be faithful. Here he's talking specifically to pastors. They have a particular race to run.

They have a particular fight that has to be fought. And he says if you're faithful there is a crown. He says I can vouch for this.

I myself saw Christ suffer and receive his crown. He says I am a partaker in those sufferings. Paul also says that he is a partaker in the sufferings of Christ.

The apostles were partakers. They shared in the sufferings of Christ and they will also share his glory. And we have that same opportunity as believers in this age.

So every place you find crowns in the New Testament you find them associated with endurance in difficulty. Endurance in suffering. Endurance in hardship.

And holding fast the word of his patience. The word of his endurance. Looking for his appearing.

Knowing that he will come suddenly. Trying to always be ready so that at any moment when this life ends we are found faithful. It is required of a steward that a man be found faithful.

Well this idea of loving the Lord's appearing and loving the Lord being associated with crowns that is the motivation. Why would you put up with hardship? I was thinking about this earlier this week because I wrenched my back. I pulled a muscle pretty severely and Patty spent long periods of time working on that muscle and massaging it.

Well massaging for the massager is not that much fun. It's a lot of work. Your arms get tired.

Your thumbs get tired. Your fingers get tired. You have to get in kind of an uncomfortable position to work on someone else.

Why would somebody you know this is one of the greatest things about being married because when you have an ache a pain and that person can do something about it they're there and they love you enough to do that because it's a self-sacrificing act. You sacrifice your comfort and your sleep or whatever else. You wake up in the middle of the night your back is hurting somebody rubs it for you.

It's a wonderful thing. To endure hardship to do something that's not pleasant you've got to have a motivation. Why should I do that? Well your spouse hopefully does things for you because they love you and they care about you.

It's the same thing here. You love the Lord's appearing. You love the Lord and you don't love the crown.

You're not saying well I'm going to do this because I want to get a crown. You endure and you put up with things that are not ideal and wouldn't necessarily be your first choice out of love. Christ went to the cross because of love.

Love for his Father and love for us. We do what we do by way of trying to be faithful and trying to be obedient because we love God and because we love one another. By being obedient we can avoid hopefully hurting one another so much and sinning against one another.

Love is the motivation. Well that reminds me of the first church we looked at. The church at Ephesus.

What was their problem? What was their condemnation? And I got to thinking I never was totally happy with my analysis of losing the first love and so I went back and took a look at that and I want to just give you the results of my re-examination very quickly here. Turn with me for our final passage tonight to Revelation 2. Verse 1 To the messenger of the church in Ephesus write to the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand the one who walks among the seven golden lampstands says this I know your deeds I know your toil I know your perseverance your patience that you cannot tolerate evil men you put to the test those who call themselves apostles and they are not you found them to be false you've got a good doctrinal standard you can weed out truth from error you've kept on doing things he says again in verse 3 you have perseverance you've endured for my name's sake that's all good you've not grown weary but I have this against you that you have left your first love well I went back and I just translated every single word out of this verse 4 because you think if they're doing so many things well it sounds like you know enduring for my name's sake what was their mistake? let me tell you the literal translation of revelation chapter 2 and verse 4 you have *ala* which means but a contrary wise situation you have *echo*

which means I have katasu against you hati because that so but I have against you and then hati this following thing that this is the word that precedes a quote he said that and it's hati that then we have ten agapane su the love of you your love ten protane from protos meaning first and then we have afekes which is from afiemi you remember in our previous letter we talked about putting up with Jezebel you have afiemi Jezebel you've let her go you've let her run on and afiemi is the word that means to forgive to dismiss to overlook to let go that's the idea of afiemi that's the verb that's used here of this love but I want to focus on what just precedes that word I have against you that ten agapane su ten protane the love of you the first when you do your work on this in Greek what strikes me is it doesn't say the protane is not right there next to love and it's in the wrong case to be your first love this is a genitive it's all in the genitive here and the idea here is your love for the first your love of the first this is not first in the sense of chronological this is first in the sense of priority your fundamental love the most important love we have tended to think well back when you had that fresh enthusiasm of a new believer now it's gone kind of hollow and so I ask myself well what exactly is this first love what exactly is this love of the most important this most important love yet this is the same usage remember when Jesus said love the Lord your God this is the first and greatest commandment Paul talks about the law and he goes back and he says honor your father and mother and he says this is the first commandment with promise well it's not the first commandment with promise if you look at the law it's not the first he says this is the foremost commandment with promise it's not first in the sense of chronology or place in the law he says this is the greatest this is the most important command that has a promise associated with it and it's the same idea here this is first in the sense of priority what does that mean well we won't have time to take a detailed look at it but how would these churches these are the churches in Asia right if they've kept the word of his patience or if they've lost their love who would they have learned all that from John right so I would expect that if I look in John's writings I would find something about this love turn to first John chapter we don't have time to look at two three and four so just look with me at first John chapter three you'll find it back in two also but that'll be your homework assignment first John three one see how great a love the father has bestowed on us that we would be called children of God and such we are for this reason the world does not know us because it did not know him beloved now we are children of God and what he's doing here in these first three verses is talking about positional truth we are children of God God has bestowed his love on us everyone who has this hope fixed on him purifies himself just as he is pure then he talks about sin in verses four through ten and how you can tell where you are by whether or not you're practicing sin and how to get over that but then take a look at verse ten first John three ten by this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious anyone who does remember the synagogue of Satan anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God nor the one who does not love his brother for this is the message which you have heard from the beginning what is the message you hear from the beginning? that would be the first one, right? the most important one the fundamental one what is the message that was at the beginning? the archaic that we should love one another not like Cain he goes and talks about that he talks about the world hating us verse fourteen we know we've

passed out of death into life because we love the brethren he who does not love abides in death I would encourage you to read first John chapter two chapter three and chapter four thinking about losing the first love we don't have time to read it all now but that is the key if you want to understand how to hang on to your crown read those three chapters he talks about in chapter four test the different influences he talks about testing the spirits the spirits are influences what do you listen to by way of teaching? what do you let into your ear gate and your eye gate? is it mostly television? is it mostly the press? is it mostly the word of God? what conditions you're thinking? and then in verses seven through thirteen of first John four he's back on the subject of love