



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Revelation 2:1-7

"The Complaint of the Risen Christ"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We have given three messages on the Book of Revelation to this point and we're beginning the second division of the book, the letters to the seven churches, which are given us in chapters 2 and 3. And we are taking this as the threefold division of the book. The vision in chapter 1 and then the letters to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3 and in chapter 4 through the remainder of the book, emphasis upon the things, which shall be hereafter. So turn with me now to chapter 2 and we read verse 1 through verse 7 for our Scripture reading. The apostle writes,

"Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee," (The Authorized Version clearly leaves a wrong emphasis by which it has rendered this verse because, "I have somewhat against thee," suggests that it's a rather minor thing. It's much better to read it and translate it as it is in most of the modern versions) "Nevertheless I

have this against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen," (and you can see from the use of that term fallen that our Lord considers this a very serious matter that he complains about) "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate." (Incidentally, we will not undertake to expound this text. Verse 6, because this again comes before us in one of the other letters. In fact, in two of the other letters but it is mentioned specifically in one of the other letters and we'll deal with the Nicolaitanes at that point. And finally, verse 7) "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches;" (and notice the plural for all of these letters are addressed not simply to the historical church but also to the whole of the church) "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

May the Lord bless this reading of his word and let's bow together in a time of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for all that this first day of the week represents. We thank thee for the encouragement that is given to us when we reflect upon the fact that early church began to worship on the first day of the week after having spent most of their lives worshipping on the seventh day. And we recognize that this historical support for the significant ministry of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who on Good Friday gave himself a satisfaction for sin, shedding his blood for sinners that we might have life. Who rose on the first day of the week, an event so majestic, so significant, that those believers began to meet on the first day of the week to remember that their Savior and ours is alive.

We thank Thee for the encouragement and for the truth. And we pray that we may never as we meet Sunday after Sunday forget that we are celebrating the fact that he is

alive. That one time dead, as he says in this very book, the Book of Revelation, that one time dead but now alive for evermore. We thank thee for the whole church of Jesus Christ. We pray thy blessing upon the entire body and for all of the members of that true body of believers over the face of this globe. We thank Thee for the universal outreach of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in gathering his own people in from so many places so that some from every tribe, kindred, tongue, and nation shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. To the glory of God the Father.

We thank Thee Lord for the privilege of proclaiming him the city of Dallas and to people who live in other places through the ministry of this little church. We pray thy blessing upon its outreach over the radio, over the tapes, and on the written page. And for other churches that name our Lord as Savior and Lord, we pray for each one of them as well. Bless them richly this day. We look forward to the day when we shall meet in heaven around the throne of the triune God. We pray Lord for those who have requested our prayers, for those who are sick, some bereaved who need ministry from thee. Oh God, minister to them through the Holy Spirit. Accomplish they will in their lives. Give healing where healing is desired. And we pray also that by Thy grace those who minister to them may minister effectively, the physicians, the families, the friends, we commit them all to thee. We pray now Thy blessing upon us in this meeting. May the ministry of the word of God glorify they name. We pray through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today is "The Complaint of the Risen Christ" and we're looking at Revelation chapter 2 verse 1 through verse 7. We have suggested in the Scripture reading that this book is divided into three parts. Chapter 1 contains the vision of the risen Christ. Chapters 2 and 3, seven letters that our Lord has written to seven churches of Asia Minor. And then in chapter 4 through the remainder of the book we are occupied with the things that shall come to pass after these things.

Now, as he has said in chapter 1 and verse 19, "Write the things which thou hast seen," (a reference to the vision) "and the things which are," (probably a reference to the letters to the seven churches) "and the things which shall be hereafter;" (we have then something of an inspired outline of the book. So we're looking at the things which are and the letters to the seven churches describe them)

One of the striking things about these letters to the seven churches is the fact that in those churches which read passages of Scripture through the year in regular form, for example, in the Anglican Church there are Scriptural readings that are given in regular form throughout the year, these letters often are neglected. In fact, Dean Alford, one of the better commentators of the Anglican Church in England commented in his interpretation of the Book of Revelation that surprisingly the letters to the seven churches are never read in the Scriptural readings of the Anglican Church. Why that is so he did not understand. He suggested they should be read. Perhaps by now they are read. But the letters to the seven churches are surely things that we who represent the church of the Lord Jesus should know and be well acquainted with.

One might ask right at the beginning why Ephesus is the first of the churches addressed by our Lord. It was an important church. One can see that by simply reading the New Testament. The Apostle Paul addressed a letter to the Ephesians. We know that the Apostle John spent the last third of his life in the area of Ephesus. And, in fact, when he was in exile he was not far away for the Isle of Patmos was not too far off the coast of Asia Minor. The seven letters are addressed to seven churches and Ephesus is something of the southwestern part of the circle of churches which rise toward the north then come down toward the south and the east so that there is a loop of churches addressed by our Lord.

We know that Ephesus was a very important city commercially. It was located on the Kaistros River and the trade of the Kaistros River Valley there consummated at the city of Ephesus. Three great roads in ancient times touched Ephesus, the road from the

Euphrates from the east and then a road from the north and road from the south met in the city of Ephesus. So it was an extremely important city. Like Corinth, it has been called the vanity fair of the ancient world. We might call it the vanity fair of Asia as over against the vanity fair of Europe. If Corinth really was such a city as that, and it seems to have been. Politically, Ephesus was a free city. It was not the capital of the Roman province of Asia. Pergamum was and we, of course, have a letter addressed to Pergamum later on.

But Ephesus was a free city and furthermore it was an assize city where judicial courts maintained their home and decrees were issued from there. It was the center of the Pan-Ionian games and it had the title of the Supreme Metropolis of Asia or the Lumen Asiae "The Light of Asia". Religiously it was dominated by the great temple of Diana. Reading the book of the Acts, for example, we have a riot in Ephesus and men shouting, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." And if you have been to the ruins of Ephesus you know that this was one of the seven marvels of the ancient world, the great temple of Diana. So this is a very religious area. It was a very wicked area. Heraclitus said that as far as he was concerned he wanted to stay away from Ephesus if at all possible. So one can see, perhaps, why Ephesus is the first of the letters addressed.

Now, we're going to take these letters in this way. We're going to understand that there are local churches, located in historical, geographical areas, and we're going to look at them in that way first of all. We're going to think of them as representative of universal Churches of Jesus Christ. In other words, the things that we see in these historic churches, historical churches of the past, we expect to see in churches today. The things that existed then will probably exist today.

Further, we are going to look at these churches as being churches that have to do with individual responsibility to the Lord. And we are going to make applications of things that we see in the letters that our Lord addressed to these churches to ourselves as individuals. It's not simply an ecclesiastical application but an individual application, as well. Whether these churches have any prophetic significance or not, of course, there are

texts that have to do with the prophetic future in them, our Lord speaking of his coming from time to time. But whether there is a kind of prophecy of the history of the Christian church in the seven churches, I doubt very much that that was the intent of our Lord.

Some have made great points over that fact. It is interesting that the last church is the letter to the church at Laodicea and other passages in the New Testament make it very plain that the condition of the church in the last days is a condition of Laodicean decline and departure from the truth. However, I do not feel from a fairly careful study of this that one can support that particular interpretation of the seven churches. Some think that that is possible. We'll even that for you to make up your own mind. Ephesus was now about forty years old as a church when the Lord Jesus addresses them with this letter.

Now, we're going to notice, too, that each of these letters follows a somewhat similar pattern. There is an address to the angel of the church and then a description of our Lord, which is given usually from some feature of the vision of chapter 1. And after that there is usually a commendation of the church by the Lord, a complaint or some difficulty that he finds with the church, an exaltation and threats with reference to their response to him and to the word of God, and finally, each one of them closes with a promise. And we will see that that general pattern is followed in all of the messages to the churches. So with that in mind we look now at the opening address. "Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write"-- it's remarkable how many interpretations have been given of this simple little statement, "Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus". It would seem that the most obvious meaning is that since the term *angelos*, translated "angel", is found numerous times in the Book of Revelation, that we would take it that way. But then most of us have certain agendas that we like to impose upon Scripture. We have to avoid that, of course, at all times.

And so if you have in your mind the organization of the local church as being an organization of elders, or deacons, or trustees, or deacons, various ways in which churches are organized. And if you have in your mind that these churches would be ruled

by a pastor, a minister who has authority by virtue of his office, then it would be very tempting for you to read this, "Unto the pastor of the church," and think of the angel as a pastor of the church. I've been in lots of pastor gathering and I have never found any pastor yet of evangelical faith who would be willing to raise his hand at an invitation, "How many of you are angels?" I don't know of anyone who has wings. And consequently, it seems to me rather strange that one would rush to that interpretation.

Now, the term occurs in the book numerous times. It always means an angel, that is a heavenly being created by God. Why we should not rather take this to be an angel rather than the pastor, well that's never been explained to me satisfactorily. If this is a reference to an individual, a human individual, it would be much more likely that he should be a man with a gift of prophecy for at least a prophet. And prophets did exist at this time in the Christian church. A prophet is an individual who receives messages from the Lord and who conveyed them to the church. So it's conceivable that one might have the gift of prophecy and be called a messenger, for that's the essential meaning of the term *angelos* in that sense. But modern scholarship has generally taken the idea, taken this expression to mean, either the prevailing spirit of the church, for after all remember we are talking about a book that has many many symbols in it. The angel being the prevailing spirit of the church or an angelic guardian of a church of which we know very little, but of which our Lord knows everything, and perhaps even the apostle knew things that we don't know. So we are going to take it as an angel and we are going to take it as being an angel who acted in such a way as to be related to particular churches.

If you want to call them an angelic guardian you can, they are not specifically called that. But we're also going to acknowledge, I hate to do this, but there's a lot about this we don't know. So we're going to call it an angel, and leave it that way, and take the burden off of the pastors of being angelic. You know, of course, they're not that. And they are not the angels of the churches by any means.

Secondly, after the address we have the description of the Lord. "These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." He says that he is the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand.

Now, the seven stars are described and defined in chapter 1 as those who are the angels of the seven churches, he holds them in his hand and he walks amide the seven candlesticks which are defined as the churches. So here is a picture of our Lord and a messages from him as one who holds the angels in his right hand and who walks, now notice it's not "walked" past tense, but who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. That is the seven churches. In other words, our Lord is presented here as an individual who is carrying on his ministry concerned for the seven churches walking in their midst.

Now, if you're a student of the word of God you know that the picture is of a high priest. He's dressed in those garments as chapter 1's vision has made known to us. He walks in them as the high priest tending to the lamp stands. Now, if your mind will go back to the tabernacle and the ministry of the priests in the Old Testament and specifically the high priest, it was the high priest's duty to enter the tabernacle and to maintain the lamp stands. And so he was always careful to remove the things on the wick that might prevent it from burning properly. He was the one who poured in the oil in the lamp stands. In other words, he cared for the lights of the lamp stand, that is in the tabernacle, the seven-branched lamp stand to be sure that it was constantly burning. That's the picture that John gives us of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one who is constantly in the churches, constantly walking, doing the things that are necessary to see that the churches that honor and glorify the name of Christ are burning with the testimony to him.

Now, to my mind that is as much of a picture of a risen Christ as one could possibly have. He is here in the midst of the church of Jesus Christ and he is careful to maintain the testimony to him. And so he does the things that are necessary that the



testimony burn brightly. Where there is sin he deals with that. And where there is need for further testimony and improvement of the testimony, he's concerned about that. The picture of our Lord walking in the midst of the seven churches, constantly doing that is to my mind one of the greatest pictures that we have in the word of God concerning the life of the churches.

Now I should, of course, mention this, that the churches, therefore, it's obvious, are precious to our Lord. And they are precious to him for the simple reason that it cost his life in order to light them. It was the blood that was shed that brought the church into being, made it possible of the lamp stand to be a lamp stand, made it possible for every true Church of Christ to shine and every community where it shines. But it costs him his own life.

Thirdly, the commendation, we'll omit verse 6 because we'll deal with that under one of the other letters. And we read in verse 2 and 3,

"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted."

A sevenfold commendation of this Church of Ephesus. You can see from this, my Christian friend, that the Lord Jesus is not blind to the beauties of the church that he has created. And he praises us as churches for the things that he sees that are acceptable to him even though he is ultimately the one responsible for the beauty of the Christian Church. So he praises the Church of Ephesus in a sevenfold way.

One might ask, "Could anything be wrong with a church of which the Lord Jesus can make seven specific commendations?" Well yes, something can be wrong with them. In fact, it's evident the Lord Jesus Christ is the center of this church but he's not the center

of attraction of the church. It's a beautiful picture, a true picture of an Orthodox church that fights for the truth but nevertheless is not warm of heart toward the Lord. Even a great church like Ephesus may have its failure and it certainly has its failure here.

Now, in speaking specifically of his commendation he says, "I know thy works." That's a word that expresses active, aggressive, activity for our Lord, so that the Lord may approve them for the way in which they have done works in the name of Christ. He praises them for their labor and their endurance. But notice, as many commentators have noticed, that all that he says is, "I know they works, I know they labor, I know they patience." Our thoughts go immediately to Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians when uses these three words, the same words, "works, labor, patience" and when he addresses the Thessalonians Paul says, "I thank God always for you. I make mention of you in my prayers when I remember without ceasing your work of faith, your labor of love, and your patience of hope." Those are very significantly missing here. It is, I thank God for your works, but not work of faith. I thank God for your labor, but not labor of love. And I'm thankful for your patience, but not patience of hope. In other words, it's possible to have works that don't really arise out of faith. And it's possible also to have labor, which does not have as its motivation the love of God and the love of Christ. And it's possible also to have patience, which is not produced by the hope that we have of the future. So here is a church that has a lot of activity. They are Orthodox outwardly, but Christ is no longer the center of attraction.

He goes on to say of them that, "thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." So you can see immediately that this is a church with discernment. They are knowledgeable enough to know when an individual has a true spiritual gift and when he doesn't have a true spiritual gift. It might seem strange to you that anyone forty years after the apostles have been on the scene and John still the scene, that a church could have any doubt about who the apostles were. We all know who the twelve were. And even if we include Paul with the twelve, we know who the

apostles were and we know Paul, but how could anyone manage to persuade a group of people that they are apostles.

Well there are apostles in more than one sense in the Bible. There is the Twelve. There is the Apostle Paul who ranks together with the twelve, but then there are others in the Bible who are called apostles. For example, the Apostle Paul refers to individuals and they are called apostles. Barnabas is called an apostle, just to give you one illustration. Apostles that may be called for convenience sake, not apostles of Christ, but apostles of the churches as they are called. That is individuals who are not one of the twelve, not of the character of them and of the Apostle Paul, but nevertheless can legitimately be called apostles, those who are sent by a church to perform a specific task. And there evidently were some who claimed to have this special gift of apostleship but did not manifest it in their lives.

Now, you might think that's something of nineteen hundred years plus ago and we shouldn't be concerned about that at all, but do you know that not long ago, about two years ago I believe it was, a southern minister well known to you if I mentioned his name, he announced that there were five apostles in the church. He, his son, and three other friends, and one of those has all ready fallen and proven that he doesn't really belong even in that company of people. So it's not something that we can think of as referring only to the past, it's something that troubles us today. There are individuals who set themselves forth as being apostles today, not only prophets but apostles as well.

But the church at Ephesus went out of their way to show that individuals who made that claim were not in accord with Christian truth. So it's possible for us to have soi-disant apostles. Now perhaps, some of you are not fluent in French, some of you are I know. Soi-disant means "self-styled". That's the kind of apostleship that Ephesus was plagued with, soi-disant apostles, those who claimed to be but who really were not apostles.

Now, further he says, "And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted," and have not grown weary. So In other words, these individuals in Ephesus were not only Orthodox, they did not only possess discernment concerning spiritual truth, but they were possessed with fidelity as well. Faithful, they worked, they did not grow weary for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And I would assume that their fidelity was not simply fidelity to the church but fidelity to our Lord. You know that's the fidelity we ought to have, fidelity to our Lord. Number one, fidelity to the church, number two, our fidelity is to him and when we labor and do not grow weary if it is for our Lord, that is surely a thing of which we should be thankful to him. We do not labor for a church primarily, only secondarily. We labor for the Church of Jesus Christ.

Now, having said this you would think, "Here is a church that could hardly have anything wrong with it." If we could have that said about Believers Chapel, how nice it would be. But our Lord in spite of these seven commendations now complains. "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." In spite of prayer meetings, in spite of witnessing, in spite of all of the ways by which they sought to make Christ known in Ephesus, Jesus says, "I have this against you that you have left your first love."

Now, this is serious because the very next text says, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen," (so this represents a fall) "first love" (great stress in the original text on the adjective "first") you have left your love, that is your first love. That initial love, that love that you had when you first came to know your Lord as your own Savior and rejoiced in the forgiveness of your sins. You have left your first love. The love of purity that we had, the love of simplicity that we had, the love submission that we had. And this is so sad that a church should leave its first love, and of all churches the Church of Ephesus. The Church at Ephesus, it had experience with the Apostles Paul, John. John spent a lengthy period of time there, Paul spent at least three years or more there

preaching the word of God and when Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians this is the last verse of the last chapter, "Grace be with all them that go on loving our Lord in sincerity. Amen." So the last word that the Apostle Paul had for this church was a desire that they experience the grace of continued love of our Lord in sincerity. And her forty years later is the Lord Jesus addressing the church and saying to them, "you have left your first love." Paul had commended them for love. Jesus must rebuke them because of their loss or having left their first love.

Enthusiasm is a term that really means something like possessed of God, it means literally "in God". So the person who has enthusiasm is the person fundamentally, as least should be, historically was a person who was caught up in the love of God. They have lost their Enthusiasm for our Lord.

Now, I think of course there is inevitably some loss of that which people might think of as Enthusiasm. When we grow to maturity we are not like little kids. And there is a sense in which a mature Christian should not be like a kid who is always getting into trouble. If you've had kids around you, and I'm thankful for Martha's grandchildren which have become mine and now I'm exposed again to the beauties and the joys of being around little kids, but it's hard for them to live too many hours without getting in some kind of difficulty.

Now, new Christians, it's difficult for them to get along for many days without getting in some kind of difficulty through misunderstanding of the Christian faith, through saying things that they later discover they should not have said. And so maturity does bring some great advantages, but one thing we should never lose in our maturity is the Enthusiasm of a relationship to Lord Jesus Christ, a deep love down within produced by gratitude for what Christ has done for us. How anyone can every really become cold and enjoy it in the Christian faith, it's difficult to understand. We can become cold but when we do, I get down on my knees and confess my sin to the Lord, try to, hope I do all the

time because it's so easy for us to do it. But never are we ever to be in a place where we have left our first love.

Campbell Morgan, writing in a message on the letter to the church at Ephesus, speaks about the emphasis on Christian service rather than on Christian love, which results in a church being faulty faultiness, icily regular, splendidly null. Judas would have no complaint against the Church of Ephesus. Judas, who complained, "Why was not this ointment," (to Mary and to the apostles) "sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor would have no reason for complaint against Ephesus because their works were manifold."

Let me ask you a question my Christian friend. Will you grieve Immanuel? Will you grieve the one who has made it possible for you to enjoy redemption and the sense of forgiveness, the sense of justification, the sense of a right relationship with the Lord? Will you grieve the one who has made this possible for you to enjoy?

Now, after the complaint comes the exhortation. In the 5th verse the apostle write, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, repent, do the first works." Remember. Remember the things that are characteristic of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ for us. I think of Jeremiah chapter 2 and verse 2 in connection with this where God pleads with the nation Israel and says to them in Jeremiah two two,

"Go, Jeremiah, cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown."

God trying to remind Israel of the way in which they had responded to his love for them in the earliest days, the love of his espousals. Remember and repent, change ones mind and engage in a different method of activity toward him. And finally, "Do those first works," what C.S. Lewis calls the Pilgrim's regress. So there is a time when we need that,

the Pilgrim's regress to remember the past, repent. Repent is something Christian should constantly be doing. And finally, doing those things, repeating those things that characteristic the early days of our Christianity. The threat follows, "or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." The loss of love leads to the loss of light, the loss of love leads to the loss of light bearing. The church today that leaves love for Christ will lose its testimony and that has happened I know you know in many cases. You can look out over Christian churches today if you've had much experience with Christian churches, and many of them had days of bright growth, life, testimony, fruitfulness, today are barren. When you go within them you can almost know from the beginning, this is a dead church, no doctrinal departure ostensibly, but first love lost.

Ignatius who wrote in the 2nd Century, and who wrote to the Ephesians, said in one of his letters that, "They repented for awhile but then where lost to Mohammedanism," and so how easy that is.

And finally, the promise of verse 7,

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." (There are two classes of people, those who overcome, those who are overcome. And the promise is addressed to the over comers which I take to be Christian believers,) "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

It's John's way of saying that things that happened in the Garden of Eden are going to be taken away and there's going to be a return to the pristine glory of the earliest times with an advance of truth.

Now, one may think that the difficulties in Ephesus were difficulties simply in Ephesus, and in one sense they were. But the difficulties that were true of Ephesus are difficulties that are true of many of our churches. In fact, if you will take me in the right sense in which I say this, I say to you and I say to you with some fear of being misunderstood, that this a danger here in Believers Chapel that we should love the truth so and the orthodoxy so that we forget the vitality of the love for Jesus Christ and the love for one another. Listen to what Paul said to the Ephesians elders as he left them years before this.

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over to which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to fee the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood, for I know this," (Paul said) "I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock," (that has begun to take place in John's day).

So I call upon you in Believers Chapel to remember, to repent, and to do the first works. What are they? Committal to him, committal to his word, reminders of what we were and reminders of what he has done for us.

There's a marvelous old story I'm sure you may have heard it, about a man who was preaching to some Indians many years ago. I like this story because it's so revealing of human nature. But in the west a missionary was speaking and he was speaking in a tent and they were Indians gather around him. He was talking about the Gospel, he began to speak of our Lord and after he'd spoken for a while the Indian chief arose, he walked forward, he laid his tomahawk down in front of the missionary and he said, "Indian chief give his tomahawk to Jesus Christ." He sat down. The missionary continued to preach and came closer to the cross of Jesus Christ. And then the Indian chief stood up, walked forward, motioned to some men, called his pony over behind the preacher,



and he said, "Indian chief give his pony to Jesus Christ." Then he went back and sat down. And according to the story as the missionary began to talk about the blood of the cross and the atonement that Christ had offered for sinners, he couldn't wait any longer. He came forward with tears upon his bronze cheeks. He got down on his knees before the missionary and he said, "Indian chief give himself to Jesus Christ." Well, it seems to me that's the response we have and the response we have to make today.

John Newton had as his favorite text Deuteronomy 15:15. There are several places in Deuteronomy where this text is mentioned, "Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee," think about that for a moment. Mr. Newton, who had lived a terrible life and was recovered by the grace of God from it, had as he was in his ministry over his desk, so I remember, or in his room, "Thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord they God redeemed thee." That's something for you and I to remember constantly to for that's really what we were. Not like Mr. Newton, but perhaps even more difficult to recover by Christ. We weren't living the miserable kind of existence that Mr. Newton was before he was turned to the Lord, but just as miserable in the sight of God, we were bondman in the land of Egypt. This word and the Lord they God, our God has redeemed us.

Thomas Goodman, one the Puritans, used to say when he felt cold and not filled with amazement at the grace of God, "I used to take a turn up and down among the sins of my past life and I always came down with a broken and contrite heart, ready to preach the gospel of Christ." Soon the alabaster box will be broken again and the Lord Jesus will rejoice at those who give themselves to him, the saints in heaven will be singing, "My Jesus I love thee."

My Christian friends, there is no real fruitful Christian life if we do not appreciate the fact that our Lord has given himself for us. May we never lose our first love for him. May he deliver us from so emphasizing other things that we forget why we really belong to him. If there is any evidence of the decision that some of us need to make, and if

there is any evidence of its satisfactorily being made, remember our Lord's words, "He that keepeth my commandments is he that loveth me." The Apostle John has said that more than once in I John. The one who loves our Lord is the one who keeps his commandments. Let us never deceive ourselves and forget that.

If you're here today and you've never believed in Christ, we remind you that you may have eternal life, you may enjoy first love if by God's grace you recognize your own lost condition, and Christ's satisfaction, his death for sinners, his propitiation of our sins, and flee to him, and receive as a free gift forgiveness of sins. As he walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, ready to save, ready to part, ready to give life. Come to him. Believe in him. Trust in him. Make that decision. And may God bless your life to the forgiveness of your sins and to a great testimony for him. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are indeed grateful to thee for this love letter that has come to us from the Lord Jesus Christ. To our great high priest who trims the lamp stands of the churches, concerned, who loves but who also disciplines and rebukes. Oh God we pray that if there are any here who have never believed in Christ that they may at this very moment turn to him, give thanks for the blood that was shed for sinners, acknowledge their place among that company and by their grace receive the gift of new life, transformation within and deliverance from the burden and guilt of sin. Go with us as we part for Jesus sake. Amen.