

Christ's Wake-up Call to the Church

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Preacher: Guest: Terry Wragg

[0 : 00] Well, that was the glorifying of the worm. Right there as Jeff was helping us see our friendship.

! It has been a wonderful, wonderful friendship. A blessing to my life just to have Jeff in my life! for all these years. Suzanne has been a wonderful partner to him. And her friendship with my wife has been a great joy as well.

I bring you greetings from my wife Rebecca and myself at Saving Grace Bible Church where I now serve in Venice, Florida and the Expositor Seminary that is there. There's 10 campuses throughout the country.

That's just one of them. And it's a great privilege to have the opportunity to involve myself in the lives of men who are training for the ministry to be able to have an impact on them and help them understand what life in the church is to be like.

And I've had a great time this weekend with the men as we have really let the Word of God examine us and challenge us in the areas of godliness and how to grow in our godliness.

[1 : 05] And I don't know if you're like me, but every time I open the Word of God, that's what it does. It just challenges me. It takes its bright light and shines it on my heart exposing areas in which my life is called up short in many, many ways.

And this morning, I don't want to be a wet blanket on a hot fire from the weekend, but I do want us to turn to the book of Revelation and let it do that to us this morning.

I want to spend our time in Revelation 2. This is such a wonderful book, the book of Revelation. It has over time been confused by so many people, and yet it need not be confusing.

God has given it to us. He has given it to us through the eyes of the Apostle John as he looks through the window of time, if you will, to see the glory of Christ in who Christ is.

This is the revelation of Jesus Christ. That's what it means, the apocalypse of Jesus Christ. It's the revelation of Jesus Christ. It's the revealing of Jesus Christ for who he really is.

[2 : 23] And so this book is the full disclosure of that if you were to study the whole thing. This is Christ on full display. This is Jesus Christ in all that he is.

And we really need to have our eyes filled with the wonder and glory of Jesus Christ. In fact, chapter 1 does that as he uncovers and unfolds that wonder of Jesus Christ.

In fact, notice, just as we start, at the end of chapter 1, we have these words. God, the Spirit of God, is Jesus Christ telling John as he watches all this unfold, verse 19, write therefore these things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall take place after these things.

And as for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

It is with those divine words that John ends what is the first section of three sections that are unfolded throughout the book of Revelation.

[3 : 52] John says here that he writes the things which you, write down the things which you have seen. And so John diligently and obediently writes the details of the vision he saw from Jesus Christ in chapter 1 and the heavenly picture that is there.

As Christ then now walks among the lampstands, the lampstands in verse 20 obviously are the seven churches. And when John begins to write about the things which are, he is writing to the church.

He is writing to the church. This is the beginning of the second section, if you will, in the book of Revelation. Now, near the end of the first century, Jesus Christ from the glories of heaven as you

read the book of Revelation looks intently into seven specific churches.

He examines the corporate spirit of the church. Every time I read this text, I wonder, what it would be like if Jesus walked into the church.

What it would be like if we're here this morning and Christ in all of his glory comes walking into the church and evaluates the church. What is he going to say?

[5 : 19] Well, here John is writing about this reality. He's examining the corporate spirit of the church. He's examining intently into specific churches and examining the corporate spirit of the church.

And he probes the mind and the heart of each one. He's really probing, as we know, not the building, not probing the equipment and the place that we gather.

He's probing us. He's probing the people. We are the church. We are those. Christ is revealing his evaluation of each one of these specific churches and in doing so he's revealing his evaluation of us.

And while each one of these churches is historic and a real church being addressed, the reality is that as you look at Revelation, you have to understand this represents the church as a whole as he evaluates us.

These are a picture of every church. As Christ evaluates the problems and as he evaluates the victories, the strengths, the weaknesses, he is, through them, evaluating the problems and the victories, the strengths, the weaknesses of many a local church.

[6 : 46] Not just these seven, every church. This is truly, as I've entitled our message this morning, a wake-up call to the church. A wake-up call to the church.

I've given these messages in the past and they have had profound impacts upon my own heart as well as upon those in the churches in which I've been privileged to serve.

this is Christ looking, as I said, at us. We live in the church age. We live in the time of the church.

And at the end of each one of these small but powerful little letters that he writes here in chapter 2 and 3 to the churches, we hear these same words.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

[7 : 54] These are words then for us. When Christ speaks to these seven churches, he speaks to us. He is speaking to Grace Church of Williamsburg.

He is speaking to the church I have the privilege to pastor in, Saving Grace Bible Church. He is speaking to the church I was pastoring in 12 months ago in New Hampshire, Fellowship Bible Church.

He is speaking to Grace Community Church and every other church that I've ever had the privilege to be in and every other church that is a God professing church.

every one of us who are part of this local congregation, these things pertain to you. So what he writes to Ephesus, he writes to you.

What he writes to Smyrna, he writes to you. What he writes to Pergamum and Thyatira and Sardis and Philadelphia, he writes to you. What he writes to Laodicea, he writes to all of us.

[9 : 03] not to really serve then as a wake-up call. So this is the second division in Revelation. There is a third division in Revelation.

That doesn't begin until chapter 4. These are the things which shall take place after these things as John writes in chapter 1 verse 19.

That begins in chapter 4. That runs all the way through to almost the end where you see the heavenly vision of a new heaven and a new earth. Why? Because that's the tribulation period, chapter 4 and beyond.

But the church is gone. In fact, after chapter 3, you will search in vain to find the mention of the church at all until you get to the end where you find the church, the bride of Christ, in the glories of heaven at the great wedding feast of the Lamb.

So in chapters 2 and 3, we get a glimpse of Christ's evaluation of the church. And I want us to focus our attention this morning on the church in Ephesus.

[10 : 06] The church in Ephesus. Probably as I was thinking about this, I thought, which one should I preach on? And I landed in Ephesus by God's design, obviously, but probably because my wife and I had the privilege and opportunity to be in the ancient city of Ephesus just a month maybe ago.

standing there thinking about these very words and the reality that what is there is nothing but boulders, nothing but ruins, nothing is there that was there when the church of Ephesus was there. And the apostle Paul having been there and planted that church and it was a great church as we will see and yet at the same time John is writing this in the evaluation of the Lord Jesus Christ only approximately 35 years later.

Church had been planted, 35 years have gone by and now Jesus is evaluating the church. Notice what he says.

Let's begin here in chapter 2, verse 1 and just read these seven verses. To the angel of the church in Ephesus write, 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 and your toil and your perseverance and that you cannot endure evil men and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles and they are not and you found them to be false and you have perseverance and have endured for my namesake and have not grown weary.

[12:01] But, I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen and repent and do the deeds you did at first or else I am coming to you and I will remove your lampstand out of its place unless you repent.

Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. So here we are, Christ looking at the church, the church in Ephesus, a very difficult place to be a light, a dark pagan city.

Ephesus was, in those days, the largest commercial city that sat on the western side of Asia Minor, what we know today to be modern Turkey.

By the way, you might be interested to know this, in Turkey itself, there are 86,000 mosques. 86,000 mosques.

[13:37] This indictment here is for this church. Ephesus had a large man-made harbor that could accommodate the largest trading ships of the day.

The ocean today is some five miles from where Ephesus' ruins lie. The silt and the sand and all of that has filled all of that back in.

But it had a large trading or large harbor. All the commercial trade routes, in fact, east, originated in Ephesus.

And all of this access made Ephesus one of the richest cities in the Roman Empire. It also was a very religious city. In fact, when the Greeks originally conquered the city of Ephesus, they dedicated the city to a Greek goddess.

Artemis. Maybe you've heard the name, Artemis. Artemis, also known as the goddess Diana. Same thing, the god of fertility to the Greeks.

[14:48] And they built a temple there to their god. It was so big and so ornate that it became known in the ancient world as one of the seven great wonders of the ancient world.

there's not a shred of that temple even laying in ruins around so you can see it today. Not a shred. It's rather amazing.

The temple dominated the city in those days. There wasn't a Christian church there until the Apostle Paul came there and spent two years preaching the gospel. I stood there in the Areopagus which is the place, the marketplace, just a dirt area today and thought about Paul going to the shop owners and places and talking about Jesus Christ.

It was phenomenal just to think about and have your mind there, this city dominated by this pagan temple and Paul there preaching the gospel. And through Paul God saves Apollos and he was and became one of the great preachers in the church in Ephesus.

And then of course Timothy was one of the pastors there in Ephesus. History tells us even that the Apostle John was a pastor there.

[16:11] So think about it. You have Paul who plants the church. You have Apollos who's a preacher there. You have Timothy who's a preacher there who was a disciple of the Apostle Paul and then you have the Apostle John who's a preacher there.

I mean this is no slouching church. This is a great church. They have been taught well. God had planted this church in this place where the temple Diana was sought after by all of the criminals and the pagans because of the because of the hiding place it became for those who were in those kinds

of lifestyles.

It was filled with temple prostitution. It was a very difficult place Ephesus to be a Christian. But God plants this church there. And they're a light in a dark place.

And now here it is looking back 35 years and Christ is evaluating their collective heart. He's giving his evaluation.

And so as we look at this I want to break it down into three main parts. Three main parts as we think about evaluating our own hearts in light of this evaluation.

[17 : 33] The parts are this. One we hear from Christ a word of commendation a word of commendation in verses 2 and 3 and verse 6. Secondly then we hear the word of condemnation in verse 4.

And then thirdly the word of counsel in verse 5. So a word of commendation a word of condemnation and a word of counsel. These are the three ways the three parts that I want us to kind of just separate out for us to look at it with smaller chunks.

Notice then the word of commendation. He says to them I know your deeds verse 2 and your toil and perseverance and that you cannot endure evil men and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles and they are not and you found them to be false and you have perseverance and have endured for my namesake and have not grown weary.

And of course down in verse 6 yet this you do have that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans which I also hate. So Christ commends them for at least three overall activities.

Notice verse 2 I know your deeds I know your toil and I know your perseverance. These are three categories of their Christian activity.

[19 : 07] That just simply tells us beloved that this is a busy church. This is an energetic church. This is an ant hill where religious practice is taking place and there's a lot of ants doing the work.

They're working hard to accomplish the work of the Lord. And part of their deeds was having no tolerance for evil men. You see that? You cannot endure evil men.

So this is a church that is sensitive to the presence of evil. They have a sensitive conscience to the reality of evil around them. So it's possible though think about it this is the evaluation of Christ and think about what he says I have this against you in verse 4 we'll get to that in a little bit but this is a reality check on their conscience.

It is possible think about this it is possible to be so accustomed to evil that you hardly notice it anymore. It's possible to have a seared conscience to such a degree through subtly embracing the poison of evil over time that you don't even know it's evil anymore.

We live in that kind of culture don't we? seems to be more sinful than it has ever been before. We talk today as if sin is running more rampant than it has in times past but I want us to understand something this morning.

[20 : 50] Man is no more sinful today than man has ever been. The difference isn't more sin here's the difference the difference is less shame over sin the sin is the same the sin is what sent Christ to the cross the sin is what it takes for God to pay for our sin so that we might have life in his name so the sin isn't any different the difference in our society is we're not shamed anymore by it our society has collectively seared its moral conscience so that what was unacceptable in the past is now acceptable common place the evils of the past are no longer recognized as evil so I want to ask us a question this morning do you see that same reality happening in your own heart here you are the church we're made up of individuals coming together collectively do you see that same reality happening in your own life in other words what shocked you in the past has it been allowed to become so accustomed in your own heart you don't even notice it anymore the things that in the past you said what now you go whatever see all evil is like that and the

Ephesian church out of duty would not tolerate it in fact notice it even poured over to calling out false teachers you you those who call themselves apostles those who come into the church and act as if they're the ones who should be leading the church and even maybe show some sign of which they might know something but they're not that and you find them to be false you don't!

tolerate! that it didn't matter who walked in the doors of the church of Ephesus they had a decision to make it didn't matter how educated or uneducated those folks were if someone came in and said we are God's people listen to us I'm a messenger of Christ what did the church in Ephesus do they put them to the test that really are you and if they found them to be liars they exposed them before everybody I think sometimes we read that and we hear about that in the Ephesian church and we applaud it don't we say wow that's that's wonderful that's so great this is a great thing they're being

diligent to protect the church they're being diligent to evaluate and to examine we want that I mean doesn't doesn't Acts tell us that that in the Berean church that's what they did they examined things to make sure they were right

I mean that's living in godliness isn't it let me tell us something in the church today it seems as if the more scrutiny you put to something or to someone the more it seems to get you blasted as the one who's narrow minded someone who is unloving someone who says let's check it from the word of God well no no no we don't want that that's too narrow in fact in today's evangelical church at large the more open you are to everything the more accepted you are deny the inerrancy of scripture and you will be applauded in fact you'll be said you're very scholarly deny the authority of scripture and you'll be seen as lovingly tolerant of all faiths you deny being dogmatic on any biblical principle and you'll be embraced by everyone as someone who truly shows the love of

Jesus that's not what the church of Ephesus did when someone showed up as a doubter or heretic who denied the faith they didn't just sit back and tolerate it they didn't say okay that's no problem come on in we'll have you anyway it doesn't matter their church sign outside didn't say we're an open and affirming church they called them out they exposed them for what they were in fact I believe the false teachers and evil men of verse 2 are identified in this passage where down in verse 6 yet this you have that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans which I also hate who are the Nicolaitans somebody please turn to chapter and verse to tell me who they are it's not in there so who are they well let me try to answer that in some way because there's no way we can be fully and absolutely dogmatic about their identity because the

[26 : 38] Bible doesn't give us any such clarity but I think we can make some observations in fact turn for a moment over to verse 12 in verse 12 we find the letter to the church in Pergamum and to this church Jesus Christ has John write this notice verse 15 thus you also have some who in the same way hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans so we see him again right there in verse 15 what does he mean by saying in the same way they in the same way hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans what does he mean by that well for us to understand what he means we need to back up a little bit and go to verse 14 I have a few things against you because you have there some who hold the teaching to put a stumbling block before the sons of

Israel to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality thus you also have some who in the same way hold to the teachings of the Nicolaitan and I think that tells us something as to who they were I think right here in the second letter to the church in Pergamum we get a glimpse into the character of another church certainly and in that church there are some who are acting and doing things just like Balaam did you remember the story in the Old Testament Balaam and Balak and the talking donkey you can read about that back in Numbers 22 we're not going to turn there but I'll just kind of summarize it a little bit so we can keep moving but what did Balaam do well Balaam was a prophet of God and he came along and persuaded the people of God to run headlong into idolatry of course we learned even this weekend that one of the!

issues of idolatry and this outworking of idolatry this love of self is immorality and that's what he did he led them into the practice of immorality he came to the nation as the prophet of God but instead of leading the people into godliness he leads them into greater and greater sin so that's what Balaam did and John here under the evaluation of Jesus Christ to the church in Pergamum in verse 15 says thus you also have some who in the same way hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans so it seems biblically logical to assume that whatever Balaam did the same kind of thing was being done by the Nicolaitans whoever they were they were leading people astray into immorality and things that were greater and greater sin they were involved in all of those kinds of things and promoting all kinds of subtle practices that would steal worship from

God and have worship go to other things primarily the worship of self because that's what idolatry is so here's what we might label it today they took the liberty that we have in Christ and they promoted it as license to do whatever you want in other words because you're saved in Jesus Christ and secure by grace go ahead and live however you want in fact you're free in Christ you don't live under the law you live under grace like Balaam the Nicolaitans were perverting grace grace was a new license to do whatever you wanted but the Ephesians they were commended for hating that don't do that they were commended by God because

God hates that I know your deeds he says I know your toil I know your perseverance this is a persecuted church in the midst of Asia Minor but they not they're not giving up they're not calling it over they're not saying enough is enough no they're not giving up no matter what it costs them and

we must understand giving up for the Christian is not an option is it we can't just throw our hands up in the society in which we live and say well this is how it is no we have to persevere we have to toil we have to call out evil where it's evil we have to expose!

[31 : 49] where it's untruth we have to stand strong on all of those it's not an option Christ says through all of this he says to the Ephesian believers to the church through all of this through all of your service through all of your difficulties through the evil and the sin through the false apostles and those who have come and gone you have remained faithful you've endured it all I mean it'd be awesome if Christ came into the!

and that's all he said this is who you are we go wow you've done it for me he said my namesake you haven't grown weary that's the only right motivation isn't it?

I mean you've done it for me we've done it for Christ we do it for Christ we're spiritual marathoners we don't grow weary we may be tempted in our weariness we may be tempted from disappointment and from unthankful people from criticism from challenges that come when people don't respond to the things that we're doing but this church didn't do that they stayed on course man you look at that you think about that you say this is a great church I mean if I was going to!

that church they got great preachers people seem to be persevering and standing strong I mean you read this if it was unfolding verse by verse and you didn't know what was coming you stop right there and say okay this is awesome and then you get to verse 4 the word of condemnation but I have against you this that you have left your first love what all of that before all of that good stuff going on at least as it appears all of that happening and and it's a problem you've left your first love it says the complaint that Christ has against this church is that they had abandoned the love they had at first first is not a word here that means chronological it means the love as it was first expressed at the beginning of life as believers you remember that day you first embraced Jesus Christ how hot was the fire in you was it was it just stoked like lava that's how Jeff likes his coffee hot as lava he said was it stoked like that the joy they had when first saved the overflowing enthusiasm they once had was now being abandoned shocked you notice he doesn't say they had no love he didn't say that he didn't say you have no love no he says that the kind of love they had at first is gone in other words their service to Christ all that we heard about in those first!

[35 : 35] that even Christ says is a good thing all of that service was becoming duty rather than devotion can you imagine the sinking within their collective hearts as they read this for the first time I thought we were doing so good this isn't John's evaluation could you imagine the apostle John who had served there in that church really Lord you want me to write that about the church I was serving there one time no this is Christ's evaluation they may have been feeling pretty good about themselves after hearing verses 2 and 3 and then Christ says yeah but your love is cold devotion to Christ was becoming duty for Christ they were no longer doing all these good things simply because they were devoted to

Christ out of love now they're falling into the trap of doing their Christian duty because they're Christians this is what I have to do their Christian lives are no longer identified by the love for Christ it's not flowing out of a heart that says I just love Christ I want to serve Christ it really doesn't matter what I'm doing I'm loving Christ I just want to love him because he loves!

no at first their love for Christ produced in them a genuine love for one another which motivated all the things they did there was joy in their service there was freshness there was energy in their lives and in their efforts but now no no everything had become mundane it became mechanical it was all routine all duty instead of being motivated out of a love for Christ from the heart it's now just mundane works I have this against you let me ask us again or say this to us it's impossible to genuinely love God and not love God's people Jeff read that this morning in fact

I'll just go there once again to remind us of these things 1st John chapter 4 so helpful for us as we think about these things right let us love one another because love is from God and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God you know what that says to me there's a lot of fake love happening there's a lot of love that's going on that appears to be love that's spelled with love but it's not love at all it's just duty by this the love of God was manifested in us how that God has sent his only begotten!

Son into the world so that we might live through him in that is love that God loved but that he loved us and sent his son as the satisfaction for our sins so if God so loved us we ought to love one another shouldn't we?

[39 : 19] over in chapter 5 verse 2 by this we know that we love the children of God how? when we love God and observe his commandments listen you want to love one another to the maximum then do what God called you to do you want to love your pastor to the maximum then follow Christ's commandments you want to love each other in that way then obey Jesus Christ this is what he says we know that we love the children of God when we love God and observe his commandments for this is love the love of God that we keep his commandments his commandments are not burdensome it says Jesus comes into the church in Ephesus and says listen this love that you say you have is nearly gone devotion to Christ is almost gone I read that

I think about my own heart I say man where am I at in that Christian life the exercise obedience on a regular basis the stuff that God calls us to walk in it can become so academic so mundane so routine that the love that I have for Christ grows cold what is Christ's evaluation of me has my devotion turned to mechanical duty is my Christianity what I do or is my Christianity defined by the outflow of who I am and who I'm devoted to this is the evaluation have we left our first love so what's the counsel what's the counsel to this church notice verse five remember therefore from where you have fallen and repent and do the deeds you did at first or else

I'm coming to you and I will remove your lampstand out of its place unless you repent you know standing there in the ruins of Ephesus today it's obvious something didn't change the church is gone it's not there in fact there's nowhere that any tour guide could point and say yeah there was the church in Ephesus it's not there the amphitheaters are there the place where Paul was arrested all of that is there there are some other places buildings there's one facade of the library that was there in Ephesus but there is no church Jesus says if you're going to move forward you need to first go back remember if you're going to move forward you need to remember remember how it was with you at the first and don't stop remembering that in fact keep remembering that with fervor keep remembering your attitude then the attitude of service you had when you first got saved by me keep remembering how you served out of a devotion to me and all you wanted to do was serve and please me keep remembering that go back to that memory and let that motivate you to repent we know what repentance is we know what it is but I'll just give you a little definition of it repentance is not merely intellectual change in other words

I change my thinking in my mind or I have some sense of grief about it that's certainly included in repentance but what is repentance is radical transformation of the entire person it is a fundamental turnaround involving both your mind your thinking and your actions that include a sorrow over the sin that got you there and because of that it results in actions that are commensurate with that repentance that's the fruit of repentance so what is Jesus saying he's saying to the people in emphasis and to us listen accept my evaluation accept my evaluation of you and that's the first step in repentance the acceptance produces sorrow over displeasing the Savior right

I'm sorrowful that this is my heart and it's displeased the Savior and then that sorrow which is a godly sorrow that produces that turnaround it produces that turning from sin into right living and so you go from duty driven devotion to devotion driven duty this is what Christ wants with the Ephesian church if we're guilty of that that's what he wants with us to love him like we did at first to love him with that kind of devotion you see the fire of this kind of love beloved can be rekindled they weren't gone they weren't he wasn't saying like he said to Laodicea I'm going to spit you out of my mouth because you're neither hot nor cold he's saying no repent turn back the Holy Spirit can breathe new life into your

[45 : 41] Bible study the Holy Spirit can breathe new life into the heart of worship that you have the Holy Spirit can give you that new energy in your prayer life but only if you remember where you were at the beginning repent and do that which you did at first because just like the Ephesian church we can have all the duty they had all the duty but we can have all the duty without the love and if love dies lights go out in fact it says here Christ says I'm coming to you verse 5 and I'll remove your lampstand out of its place unless you repent you see the foundation for all that we do the foundation for all of our singing all of our teaching all of our fellowship all of our times together the foundation for all of our prayer time

Bible studies whatever it is has to be seated deep in a love for Jesus Christ or it's just worthless duty it's just an exercise we can look good on the outside we may have all our doctrine right we might even look like the most active church in the community but are we devoted to Christ are we devoted to Christ when you wake up on a Sunday morning do you say in your heart I can't wait to be with God's people or do you wake up and go Sunday again oh it's been a long week and you

drag yourself in here forlorn come in the doors late find your seat try to conjure up some sense of worship in your heart listen a loss of love for Christ will always have adverse consequences on your activities it will always have an adverse effect on our conduct and our attitudes we can look good on the outside we may have all the things right we may be the most active around but are we devoted to

Christ because that's why we're to serve if we don't serve like that it's just simply duty and we're like the church in Ephesus our love has grown cold and here's the reality Christ is watching Christ is watching and Christ is evaluating and so he says he who has an ear let him hear what the spirit says to the churches to him who overcomes I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God ah beloved may this be a wake up call to each one of us in the church may it be that in our hearts what would you pray with me heavenly father gracious merciful God of all glory we thank you that your eye scrutinizes with clarity that it evaluates down to the thoughts and intentions of our heart and that as you evaluate us as we look at the mirror of your word and we see our own hearts

Lord may all those things that are exposed by you that should not be there may we be willing to repent of that turn from it agree with your assessment turn from it so that our hearts would be filled with love that we had at first that love that ran to you that love that was embraced by you even as feeble as that love was as childish as our faith was you embraced us and gave us life and we began to live for you yet over the years it seems as if much has grown cold Lord thank you for the warning and thank you for the blessing of forgiveness that we have in you that we can return that the fire can burn hot again oh Lord

I pray that you would encourage each one of us each heart in this room that this church here would be a church not only filled as we heard this weekend with godly men but with all people who burn with a hot fire of devotion to Jesus Christ our Savior when people look at this place they know it's different not because of what it does but because of who their Savior is they live for him so that you are glorified in this place that Virginia is taken by storm because of the people in this place that your name is exalted above all things all to your glory and all to your praise we give thanks and pray in Jesus name amen