

Message to the Church in Ephesus (and to us)

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Date: 22 May 2016

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Good morning everyone. And a warm welcome to church this morning. It's good to see everyone here. It's good to have some visitors with us as well.

You're especially welcome. If you're able to stay, at the end there's tea and there's coffee and a timeless fellowship available if we're able to stay behind.

The evening service is at 6 this evening and we'll be taken, God willing, by a cell. And there's various intimations in the course of the week as normal. Evening, ladies' Bible study tomorrow, first group on Tuesday.

Prayer meetings on Wednesday at half past seven. We're to the public on Tuesday. All these as usual. In addition to that, on Tuesday of this week we have coming and he's going to speak to us about a forthcoming visit that is scheduled.

He's been working overseas at points in the past and he's been working with Afghan refugees in Glasgow over the last few years. So he's going to come and speak about the ministry that he has been undertaking and he hopes to go on to in future months.

[1 : 15] So if you're able to come, that's half past seven this Tuesday here in the community centre and it would be good to see as many as possible at that meeting.

The Challenger Bus Community Funding takes place during the afternoon of Saturday 28th of May from 2 to 4.30. That's this coming Saturday. Saturday and there's a programme of things for the course of the week.

I'm not going to go through it, but you can pick one of these up at the table along at the end and see the events that are scheduled for the course of the week. And those who are not going to be attending, and that's the majority of us because we're age disqualified, we can be praying for that work, please, in advance and over the course of the week.

The services next Sunday, 11am, will be a family service and that will be led by the Challenger Bus Team. 6pm is the Gaelic service, which will be led by Angus MacLeod and 8pm will be the English Fellowship, as usual.

A couple more intimations. It's hoped to have a children's holiday club from 8th to 11th of August. And just as we're trying to see how viable this is, volunteers-wise, I think we've had a decent response this far, but if you're able to help, please add your name to the list that's sitting at the table at the door there.

[2 : 37] And also it's proposed to have catering, hospitality teams to help with various church events. We have a few of these scheduled for the next wee while. If you're able to help with that, please also put your name on the sheet that's at the table there.

Two more informations. We will be losing two of our young folk from the Crest Rota after the holidays. So if anyone would like to volunteer to join the Crest Rota, please contact Nurse Marion. And the final intimation is in relation to yesterday. Thank you to all who helped the Nathan Baking and came along to support the Youth Fellowship Cathy yesterday.

£720 was raised to go towards their forthcoming trip in the summer to Nepal. So it's a good amount that was raised, and thank you to those who helped in any way.

One further intimation is just regarding the property to give you a very brief update on the case of the present. Good morning. Just to give a very quick update, and I'll firstly apologise.

[3 : 40] I should have maybe given this information last week. I didn't realise that the application going into the paper would create some press interest further, and some of you may have heard a media briefing on the Gaelic Radio on Friday.

It's just to say that the planning application has gone in for the inn to see whether we can get change of use, and what we've got to now wait for is that planning consent to come through.

There's a letter going to the health corps to ask for permission to use the car park at the doctor's surgery, and we're waiting to hear back from the health corps in relation to that.

That obviously shifts our time scale, and as was discussed on the radio on Friday, the inn will be open during that period of time, so please don't be alarmed at that.

It doesn't mean that things aren't moving. It just means that the timeline around things has shifted. Once solicitors became involved and started looking at parking and the other things that needed to be sorted out, we obviously then have to take our time to go through the different things, and we'll continue to progress, and we'll continue to ask you to pray.

[5 : 00] In relation to that, obviously the planning application's gone in, and we would look for the council to look fairly beyond that, and hopefully there'll be no objections to it, and certainly ask you to continue to pray, and we'll keep you updated.

Obviously we'll try and get an update for the next congregational meal in June, and see where we are then. But if anyone's got any questions, I'll be around after the service, and certainly prepare to answer them.

Thanks so much. Thank you, Gordon. Let's just pray before we sing.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for this new day, this day where we remember our Lord's death, and particularly his resurrection.

We thank you that this is the Lord's day, and we can rejoice, and be glad in it. And we thank you that whenever two or three come together in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we have the assurance, the promise that you will be present with us.

[6 : 12] And we pray that as we do that just now, that you would draw near to us, and that you would enable us to know your nearer presence, and enable us, we pray, to be in the spirit of worship on the Lord's day.

So bless this time we pray, and continue with us, and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you, Diva, for that gift. That's very kind.

We're going to begin now by singing to God's praise, and we sing from Psalm 84. Psalm 84.

The words are on the screen and also in the red book, if you would rather use the red book. Psalm 84. And we sing it to the double tune, and so we sing, I think, the whole psalm, and it may be that we have to sing one extra verse just to bring the double tune to that end point.

So how lovely is thy dwelling place, O Lord, boast to me the tabernacles of thy grace, how pleasant Lord they be. Please stand to sing.

[7 : 27] How lovely is thy dwelling place, O Lord, boast to me the tabernacles of thy grace, how pleasant Lord they be.

My thirsty soul, I'll feel and flee, yet great thy thorns to see.

My valley dark and flesh dry, O living God for thee.

Behold, behold, the spot, O bindeth her, a house where it's to rest.

The soul, the lost of all her stuff, hath purchased her nest.

[8 : 42] In thine old altars, where she stayed, her young once forfeited rain.

O thou almighty Lord of hosts, who art thy God and King, blessed, blessed, blessed, blessed, O Lord, where thy house not dwell, thy ever give thee grace.

Blessed is the man who strength the Lord, in whose heart are thy ways.

who passed in vain, O hallowbign unto you Laying the fields, Hug, whereeth in the day card wells, of soul, the brave, and all her■, that pools with water fill the tool with waters filled.

Again let's unite our hearts and let's pray Our Heavenly Father again we thank you for this opportunity to come into your presence and we thank you we find when we come to you when we come to Jesus as he calls us to we experience that there is that rest, there is that refreshment there is that quenching of all that our souls long for we've sung in the psalm of how our souls are thirsty and we thank you that we find that thirst quenched in Christ and so we pray that you would enable us this morning to draw near and to wait in your presence. We thank you for the verse that tells us that those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength and we thank you that is the experience of so many over the years and all of your children. We thank you that when we wait upon the Lord we do indeed find that our strength is renewed, that our hearts are stern and Lord that we find that peace and that satisfaction and that purpose we pray that you alone can give. We pray Lord that you would forgive us this morning we are sinners. We are often wayward in our thinking and in our speaking and in our action and in our inaction and we confess that sin even

since the last time we have met as we think back over past days we can think of so many times we have let you down and we pray that you would cleanse us and you in the blood of Christ and that you would give us that strength to enable perseverance in our walk with you. So cleanse us from sin we pray. Forgive us for the times that we drink from broken systems. The times that we raise glasses to our mouths of things that cannot satisfy.

[12 : 22] We confess Lord that there are idols in our lives and we pray that they would be torn from the throne that we would worship only Christ. None but Christ can satisfy. And so we pray that we would know that and that we would experience that and that we would live that out.

We pray that we pray that we pray for those who are in particular need today. We pray for those who have no sense of their need of Jesus. We can have many blessings in this world in terms of health and wealth and happiness and yet if we do not know that need of Christ we are lost. And life has no meaning and eternity is a fearful prospect. And so we pray for those who are still unconscious of the state that they are in apart from Christ. We ask that you would wake them Lord in your mercy.

Lord in your mercy. And we pray that you would enable us as individuals and as your church to go out with that good news of Jesus Christ. To respond to that great commission. To share the gospel message. We pray for the challenge of us outreach over the course of these next few weeks. We ask Lord in our hearts. We ask Lord in our hearts. We ask Lord that you would prepare the hearts of the children and their parents alike that they would be allowed to come. And when they come we pray that they may be given understanding. To see Jesus and hear all that Jesus calls us to.

[14 : 06] So we pray for that ministry and for the team that will come. And we ask that you would prepare them and bless them in service and use them for your glory. We pray for every endeavour to reach out with the gospel message undertaken by us as a congregation here.

And every congregation in this area where Christ crucified is preached. And we ask Lord that you would add your blessing and that you would build your church. We pray in particular free and murder this afternoon as he undertakes to lead the gallic service in the general assembly in Edinburgh of the Church of Scotland.

And we ask that you would give him the words to say. And that you would strengthen him, encourage him and may we indeed hear Christ crucified preach.

And Lord we pray for both assemblies in Edinburgh. We think of the assembly of the Free Church beginning I think tomorrow. And we ask for wisdom for all who will attend.

And we pray that all the decisions that are arrived at that they would rely on to your glory. And that you would bless all the work that is undertaken in the Church for the glory of Christ.

[15 : 24] We pray for those in particular physical need today. We think honour those who are in hospital. And we ask that you would draw near to them. That you would lay your healing hands upon them.

And that they would be brought back to health and strength. And be brought back into physical fellowship here with us. And for those who are distressed in their minds.

For those who are infirm and unable to be present. But have that desire to be. We ask that you would draw near to them. We thank you that you are everywhere.

That you do not find that you are limited. By houses made by human hands. And so Lord we pray. That by your spirit and through your word.

You may bless all those that come to our minds. As we pray for them. We ask now Lord that you would lead us. By your spirit. Open up your word to us.

[16 : 20] As we read it. And as we sing it. And as we study it. And we ask that the words of our lips. Whether in preaching.

Or in praise. That they would be. The outflow of hearts. That are tuned. Out of love for Christ. Hear our prayers.

And continue with us. We pray in Jesus name. Amen. Boys and girls. Would you like to come forward please? How's everybody today? All fine.

I'm needing. I'm needing. Two volunteers this morning please. You're getting wise eh?

They won't volunteer. And I need to know what's going to happen. I'll steal you the brave man. Girl as well please. Come on Katie. Now let's get the two of you up just now.

[17:18] You stand up. Now here's the question. You face the. Well face the congregation for a wee minute. What's going on in the hearts.

Of these two here. Now what's going on in their hearts. We can see in our bodies. Two fine specimens there don't we? But can we see underneath the skin?

No. We can't see underneath the skin can we? So we don't know how the hearts are. So how can we know how the hearts are? Dr. Latham.

Leave him out of the police. Now then.

What does Dr. Latham have in his pocket? I just happen to have one of these. Dr. Latham.

[18:22] There you go. You can take that so. You know what you're talking about. You know that you know what you're talking about. So. So. If we want to know how the heart is.

Inside. Is there anything that we can use? Any kind of tools that we could use to. To understand. Well we can certainly use a stethoscope. That would be very useful. The stethoscope. So how do we use a stethoscope?

Well. Over to you Dr. Latham. Can I have a listen to your heart? Okay. So I put it in my ears. And. I've got this.

Diagram here. Which. Picks up all the noises from the heart. Right. So. Is it okay if I have a. We listen? Is that okay? I'm just going to put it down here.

Is that okay? Yeah. That's okay dad. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It's very healthy.

[19:19] Very healthy. Excellent. Alster. And. And for Katie as well. Do you want to do that Katie too? Where's Tini? Russell. Are you alright? Is that okay? Yeah.

Okay. She's standing by. Okay. Okay. Thank you. Okay. We'll have a wee. What would you do? You'd just do the same thing wouldn't you? Yeah.

That's right. I'd just sit. Just do the same thing. Okay Katie. You can sit down. It's fine. Yeah. It's fine. And Al's talking. So. What we discovered is. We can't see what's going on inside the heart.

Just by looking. But there's certain things that you can do. And they show us what's going on underneath. And Dr. Latham put the thing in his ears. And he had a wee listen.

And he could hear the heart going. What was it like? Da-dub. Da-dub. There. Just. Just like that. I was in hospital on Monday with Anna. In Glasgow. And the doctor. He said.

[20:14] Right. I think we need to know what's going on inside. So he said. Let's take you over to a different room. And he gave. And. Well what do you think he gave her? An.

An. An x-ray. Yes. An x-ray. And that shows what's going on underneath. My dad's in hospital just now. With a problem with his heart.

You can be praying for him please. And. When he got to the hospital. He said. We need to do an ECG. What does that tell us? Well that tells us about the electrical activity in the heart.

Again. It's quite useful to. And the rhythm. And what's going on with the electrics within the heart. So that tells us all different things about the heart. That we can't see.

Or hear. With our ears. But we need these different things to know what's going on. In the heart. Do you know that God. He doesn't need a stethoscope.

[21:13] And he doesn't need an x-ray machine. And he doesn't need a ECG machine. If such a thing exists. It says in a verse.

1 Samuel 16 and verse 7. That man. And woman. We look at the outward appearance. Just how we look at. But God.

Looks. At. The. I can't hear you. Alistair. No. God looks at the heart.

He looks at the heart. And he's not just talking about the dumb. The dumb. The dumb. The dumb. God is talking about what's. Really going on underneath.

And inside us. And God speaks about our hearts. In the Bible. He's talking about who we really are. In our hearts. In our souls. And so he looks.

[22:10] Into every one of us. And he sees right in. To our hearts. What do you think he sees? Do you think.

Do you think he sees that we're perfect? Or do you think he sometimes sees sin? What do you think? Let me tell you.

When he looks in my heart. Nobody often sees. Sees sin. And. That makes. God. The Holy Spirit. Who lives.

In our hearts. Sad. And so do you know what happened? Who came? Who came to save us from our sin? Yeah.

Jesus did. And what did he do? Where did he go? Where did he go? Boys and girls. You tell me.
[23 : 10] I'm going to have too much fun. Where did Jesus go to save us from our sins? Again, you know. He came from heaven. And he came to this world. And what did he do?

Where did he go to? He went to that. He went to that what? Clothes. He went to that cross. And he died.

To take. He died. All the sins. Why? To take. All the sins. To take away our sins. And you know that when we trust in Jesus.

And when we say please forgive me for all my sins. Because of all that Jesus did. He gives us a different heart. And you know that when God looks at our hearts.

You know what he sees? Not our sin. But Jesus' perfectness. Those boys and girls. God sees our hearts.

[24 : 08] He loves us. He wants to take away our sin. And he wants to give us new hearts. Jesus' heart. So let's pray about that now.

Let's pray. Lord God. We thank you that you love us so much. That even though you see the mess that's.

In so many of our hearts. Because of our sin. We thank you Father. That you sent Jesus your son. To this world. And we thank you Jesus. That you came to this world.

From heaven. Knowing that you would have to go to a cross. And we thank you that you went to a cross. To die. To take away our sin. We thank you that.

When we ask for forgiveness. We're giving new hearts. Clean hearts. And we pray that you would help. Every one of us. Whether we're young.

[25 : 02] And in school. Or in Kropokin. Or whether we're older. And working. Or even retired. If we've never yet asked for forgiveness. We pray that even today. We would ask you to come in.

And change our hearts. And we pray all these things. In Jesus name. Amen. Thank you boys and girls. And Dr. Latham. For helping me.

We're going to sing again now. And we sing to God's praise. And this is a hymn. Which is a hymn. That comes from a new heart. Jesus.

All for Jesus. 1075. In this in praise. And the words are also on this stream. Jesus. All for Jesus. All I am and have. And ever hope to be.

Okay boys and girls. If you want to help us understand my peace. As they go. Remember what we're to do. We pray for them. And now we turn in our Bibles.

[26 : 03] To Revelation. Revelation. We read from chapter 2.

And verse 1. This is the first of seven letters to the churches. Ephesians. We'll backtrack a wee bit within the sermon.

But we'll just read the section that we're going to study. Particularly today. And that's verses 1 to verse 7. Of Ephesians. Of Revelation chapter 2.

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write. These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand. And walks among the seven golden lampstands.

I know your deeds. Your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men. That you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not.

[27 : 12] And have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name. And have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you.

You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen. Repent. And do the things you did at first. If you do not repent.

I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. But you also have this in your favour. You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans. Which I also hate.

He who is in here to hear. Let him hear what the spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes. I will give the right to eat.

From the tree of life. Which is in the paradise. Of God. Amen. And may God bless. The reading of his word to us.

[28 : 11] And give us understanding. Don the tree. Is now going to come. And lead us in prayer. In God. Of God. The thing to say.

The ■■■■ probiotics. So, you're very caught with your heart and you'll see mosques. And how to do it all on another the house, also freedom settles all on each side.

And there's a thief from the slay and as far as they live on others. Rhyme Kanatoan greatly
Customer Namanas v'tit samcomillat Ur't ■■ Kyle Hurleasa Aussie and her body will die and
become my bodyguing and Edinburgh Havevas knowledge of the world.

Also learn which Two days my life should listen to, and make them feel at peace and decline.
Explain miss Today.

O life should know after their daysomymonths past Jake's days. In prior years, I'm ending the page
with a text next to me.

[30 : 30] Inside includes a mastermind. Why in this room ■ is ready to cross and run?

And this means that better hahaha. old states good Jewish Aboriginal knowledge 64 64 64 bring
you Jesus in the silver.

In Jerusalem, Hilary Age of God. For the ne dis■■■ning of his many ■ilsthen Because there is his
message for his■■ And for the spread of the kahlon Amen we sing again right to god's praise and
we sing from psalm 42 and the first two stanzas of that psalm in galop psalm 42 and we sing the
first two verses like is the heart for watered boots and thirst doth pant in gray so pants my longing
solo god that come to thee and may my soul for god living god doth thirst when shall i near until i
countenance approach and in god's sight appear these two verses in galop and we remain seated
to sing my is ■■ a machine what

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[36 : 25] Satsang with Mooji and let's ask the Lord for help with that Heavenly Father we thank you
again for your word and we thank you for the Holy Spirit who is a comforter he is a helper he is our
teacher and we pray that as our souls thirst for God that you would meet with us in the word of God
that you would speak to us as a church and as individuals and Lord we pray that you may bless us
as we look for this food for our souls and we pray these things in Jesus name Amen I think it's the
6th of June is the day and on 6th of June we shouldn't be telling people this when the police are
here the 6th of June my MOT is due so I hope to get the garage in get the car into the garage
before that point but why does the car need an MOT?

well the car needs an MOT just to make sure that it's road worthy to make sure that it's fit for
purpose to essentially check that the car is still doing what now, 8-9 years on from its manufacture
what it was designed to do and today we come to this section in Revelation that's the first of a new
series today and we begin this short series looking specifically at the letters to the churches as we
have them in chapters 2 and 3 and so with chapters 2 and 3 open over the next few weeks we will
seek to undertake to go through an MOT for the church and because the church is made up of
people and the church is not the fabric and the fixtures and the furniture this is an MOT of our own
hearts now we think about the car MOT again for a moment who can do an MOT?

could any of us just undertake to do an MOT of a car tomorrow morning? well, you know the answer
for that is no I can't do an MOT I can't put my car through an MOT or anyone else's it needs to be
somebody who's got a bit more knowledge than I have somebody who's qualified and approved to
be able to carry out these kind of checks the car needs to go to someone who knows what he or
she is doing now who is it that writes these letters to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3?

who is it that undertakes this diagnostic study of these churches and then publishes the results for
their instruction and for ours because the problems that are noted here are problems that will be
within every church in every place at every time so who's the author of this?

well the author is Christ the author of these studies the one who carries out these studies is Jesus it
says in verse 1 these are the words chapter 2 this says these are the words of him who holds the
seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands slightly cryptic the
stars that Jesus holds in his right hand signify the angels so the guardians of the seven churches
that's quite an awesome thought in itself the churches have angels they have guardians who are
overseeing and seeking to protect and seeking to guide the golden lampstands of verse 1 are the
seven churches themselves from which the light of the gospel should shine but the one who
addresses these churches is Jesus of course John transcribed the letter but John is writing what
Jesus told him to write

[41 : 00] John is writing what Jesus himself sees and that much is clear from the previous chapter
let's just read from Revelation chapter 1 and we'll go from verse 10 of chapter 1 let's just set this in

context chapter 1 verse 10 it says on the Lord's day and John is the writer on the Lord's day I was in the spirit and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet which said write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches to Ephesus, Myrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea I turned around says John to see the voice that was speaking to me and when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest his hair his head and his hair were white like wool as white as snow and his eyes were like blazing fire his feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters in his right hand he held seven stars and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword his face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance when I saw him

I fell at his feet as though dead then he placed his right hand on me and said do not be afraid I am the first and the last I am a living one I was dead and behold I am alive forever and ever and I hold the keys of death and ease right therefore what you have seen and so John wrote and we need to read and we need to listen because it's Jesus who's addressing not only then back then but us right now Jesus is the one who's addressing the churches Jesus is the one who's addressing us through the word this morning and Jesus is the one who knows us to carry out an accurate assessment we're saying even in terms of the car you need to have somebody who knows what they're doing needs to be someone who has insight and twice in verse 2 we're given that emphasis twice we're told that Jesus the one who's writing he knows us he knows our circumstances he knows our situation he knows our culture and every subculture he knows our past he knows our present he even knows our future he knows all things and he loves us he wants the best for us as his children he laid down his life for us as we were reading in Ephesians actually so let's listen to him let's listen to the king and the head of the church as he writes to the church in Ephesus in AD 95 but also to us in AD 2016 right when we're waiting for a diagnosis whether we are in a doctor's surgery or whether we're in a waiting room in a hospital or whether we're in a MOT centre very often the person who's done the study will come up to us and they'll say well I have your results here and there's good news and there's bad news and we brace ourselves and that actually is the structure of things here in Ephesus as they receive

Jesus' diagnosis first of all they're given good news and then they're given bad news so we'll take it in that order first of all there's the good news there's commendations there's three commendations that's the first point commendations that Jesus gives to the church in Ephesus they had energy they had endurance and they had ethics so first of all energy verse 2 Jesus says I know your deeds your hard work the word is toil the word is a word that speaks about sweat and labour and real hard work and so Jesus says I know your deeds hasn't gone unnoticed I know how hard you've been working and this was an active church this was not a church that was a bit like a museum where there was the odd meeting and there was nothing much else going on there was no energy or vibrancy about the church this was an active church they did things they did all kinds of things we can imagine they worked hard at being a church you can imagine the information sheet being longer than ours if that's possible not just a Sunday service but I expect you can see on the information sheet a prayer meeting and a Sunday school and a YF and a in-between club and fellowships and parish visitation and social justice type things they perhaps entertained the lonely and visited the sick and taught the young and they cared for the elderly and all these things all these good works they undertook and they were attentive the Ephesian Christians were known for being diligent they were known for being industrious they had energy and Jesus commended them for that secondly they had endurance in terms of commendation

Jesus says verse 2 I know your deeds your hard work and your perseverance you have verse 3 persevered and have endured hardships for my name and have not grown weary now when we are working we are expending ourselves in the work of the church and there is a community that looks on and applauds it is actually quite easy to do all these kind of things it fuels us that kind of thing but that wasn't the experience of the Ephesians we may be able to do things and have the approval of a community that looks on in various regards but the Ephesians experience was contrary to that they lived in a very cosmopolitan a very aggressively multi-faith culture so to give honour to all kinds of myriads of gods that was acceptable and that do a round of applause but to speak of the one true God that was not acceptable that caused offence that caused offence to those who practised magical arts from the east that caused offence to those who worshipped the goddess Diana remember that huge temple was the spectacle of that city in Ephesus to be a Christian and to

advocate worship of the one true God caused a downturn in the business of those who manufactured silver idols so it meant that there was going to be opposition and so they suffered opposition and they suffered persecution but through all that they persevered they showed endurance and Jesus saw that and Jesus commended them for that he commended them for their energy he commended them for their endurance and the third thing we see here is they had ethics what I mean by that is they they knew why they were doing what they were doing not only did they do good things and persevere in good things and know why they were doing these good things but they stood opposition to bad things they had principles they had ethics they stood in opposition particularly to bad doctrine look at verse 2

Jesus says I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not and I find them false then in verse 6 it's reiterated but you have this in your favour says Christ you hate the practices of the Nicolaitans which I also hate now who the Nicolaitans were we're not very sure about the Greek word Nicolaus means destroyer of the people and so we can suppose that this cult or this group of people who were infiltrating the church in Ephesus they were intent on destruction spiritually speaking and it seems that the Ephesian Christians were alert to these people and they were not tolerant of these people those who wanted to come in and destroy the faith by denying the word of God they saw them they spotted them they would not tolerate them they stood against them and they had ethics and Jesus commended them for that so there's the three commendations the church in Ephesus had energy they worked hard they had endurance they persevered even when things got hot under the collar they had efforts they cherished the view doctrine they discarded the bad doctrine and Jesus gives a warm approval in respect of these three points and we should just take note of that at the moment we are having to give consideration to what a church building should look like and it's important that we do that but it's actually far more important that we give consideration to what a church fellowship should look like because buildings come and go and here

[52 : 09] Jesus gives us three pieces of the jigsaw three points which will bring with them his approval like the Ephesians we are to have energy we're not just to be content as individuals and as a congregation with spectator Christianity we should constantly be looking for ways to serve Christ gospel message is important the gospel message applies to everyone it's urgent and it's worth expending energy and not just for this hour but right through the week as God gives us opportunity so we're to have that energy that the Ephesians had we must have we like the Ephesians are to have endurance now in the time that they were writing many were losing their lives for the cause of the gospel under the tyranny of the emperor dominican he persecuted

Christians acutely now we're not experiencing that kind of persecution but to say that Jesus is the only way to the father to say that Jesus is the only name under heaven by which someone can be saved to say that we worship the one true God that is attracting increasing hostility in this place at this time and Jesus warned us that's the way it was going to be and things may become very uncomfortable for the church of Christ in years to come here if you think about perhaps our children but through all that we have to show endurance as the Ephesians did and like the Ephesians we are to have ethics still there are Nicolaitans who would seek to infiltrate any church at every time still there are influences which are satanic that seek to destroy the people by corrupting the gospel message and like

Ephesians what are we to do we have to test everything against the word of God the code of ethics that we need is not subject to modification it's not subject to revision it's been given to us in scripture and like Ephesians we have to hold fast to so there's the commendations three of them and secondly we come to that was the bad news that was the good news and secondly we come to the bad news there's a complaint and just before we get into the complaint if we were to imagine just observing from a distance this church in Ephesus because we all do that sometimes we'll visit a place and we'll see this church big church lots of stuff going on seems to be a wonderful place and you kind of look in and you think this looks like the perfect place can imagine people looking into the Ephesian church this was the profile that was on display it looks very much like a church can be absolutely celebrated it looks to the naked eye like there's no cracks in it energy insurance ethics they're solid they're doctrinally sound they're active there's no cracks that can be seen to our eye but Jesus sees something different like he said with the children man looks at the outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart and as Jesus looks into the heart of this church he sees one grave reason for concern he has one serious complaint verse four he says yet I hold this

against you you've forsaken your first love what did

God want from me what does God want from us me first what does God want from his church today he wants our love he wants our devotion we can have seeds and seeds of these informations good that we have energy endurance necessary but he wants our love he wants our devotion that's the message that is dominating all of scripture think about Matthew 22 verses 37 and 38 Jesus responds to the question that comes from the legal expert it's the greatest command love the Lord your God says Jesus with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind this is the first and the greatest command think about what the apostle

[57 : 55] Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13 he studied it not so long ago he says if I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love I am only a sign in God or a clanging symbol if I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge and if I have a faith that can move mountains but have not love I am nothing if I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames but have not love I gain nothing and that was the charge that was coming to the church in Ephesus see without love without that heart love for God we can do things many things but we can't truly serve him without love the church's work substantial as it might be it's lifeless one of the eaters in the house week before last it went about wrong it's fixed now

I think but for a couple of weeks there it looked like a heater absolutely like a heater it looked perfectly fine but there was no power going through it and there was no heat radiating out from it and that was the problem of the Ephesian church they looked the part they were busy they were solid they were sound doctrinally but they were loveless there was no agape love radiating out from them Paul's prayer to the church in Ephesus at the end of the letter that we've been studying for some months now in the evenings at the end of the book of Ephesus Paul says in his letter this is Ephesians chapter 6 verse 24 grace to all who love our

Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love so that again his prayer his sign off to them was grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love and sadly somewhere along the line Ephesians lost their love and many perhaps didn't notice but Jesus noticed and Jesus pulls them up through this letter and Jesus still notices as he looks at us today as one small fellowship of his church how is your heart this morning as I have to ask the question how is mine why are you here this morning in church you know sometimes we go through periods where we come and it's just a mechanical routine we just come and we come and we come sometimes we may come to church and it's really to make other people happy because we're going to get grief if we don't come some might just come out of a sense of religious duty

I don't know but if we come to church and if we do the work of the church and this applies to me first and probably more so than most don't think I'm pointing down at anybody here if we come to church and do the work of the church for any reason other than I have love for Christ and the charge Jesus held against the Ephesians he levies against you and me you and you have forsaken your first love it's what the hymn writer came to realise as he penned the words that we often sing where is the blessedness I knew when first I saw the Lord where is that so refreshing view of Jesus and his word and the refrain is oh for a closer walk with God that's what the

Ephesians in all their busyness and orthodoxy they needed to get back to that close loving walk with God and above all that is what Jesus wants as he looks at us this morning he wants our love he wants our devotion and our energy and our ethics and our endurance should all be driven from this deep love that we have for Christ so there's the commendations and then there's the complaint or the charge whatever word you want to take and third there's the command so the complaint is levied against us as the diagnosis the command here is given to us as the cure so we feel the bite of some of what

[63 : 54] Jesus was saying and is saying to us this morning this is how we should respond three things just very very briefly we're to remember we're to repent we're to resume Jesus says in verse 5 remember remember the height from which you have fallen see the Ephesians they've grown cold they've fallen from the heights of intimacy and deep love and devotion and close communion with God they've fallen from that height to this lower level of industrious and yet cruel lifeless religion that's how it seems and Jesus says it's time to wake up it's time to remember who you are and where you were and where you are now and for the

Christian it's so important that we have a good spiritual memory we need to remember that once we were utterly lost and hopeless never forget that we forget that we're going to get proud if we're going to forget that we're going to think that God can't reach others who are as lost today as we

were once we must remember that we need to remember the cost of our salvation and never forget that or we're going to get cruel and hard Jesus knew sadly how quick we would be to forget and so he says or Paul reminds us in the letter to the Corinthians the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took bread when he had given thanks he broke it and said this is my body which is for you do this in remembrance of me in the same way after supper he took the cup saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me we lost our love we need to remember and secondly we need to repent verse 5 we're not to remember and realise where we've been and how we've fallen and then just carry on regardless you know like the man in James who looks in the mirror and sees the mess in his face and then just walks out the door if God shows us the state of our hearts and if our hearts have lost that love then we remember we repent of our coolness and our lovelessness we change direction we turn from sin we repent remember repent resume it's very practical so in verse 5 I think it's a they are resume yes and do the things you did at first repent and do the things you did at first you know when couples are struggling in their marriages and they go and seek advice and go and seek help this is very often the very practical advice that's given take time remember when you first met each other remember when you fell in love remember the things that you used to do go and do them again used to go out on a date walking up the hills go and do it again out for dinner writing wee notes writing wee cards I don't know how romantic the company is that's often the advice the things that cause your relationship to be so alive and so blessed remember what these things were resume them do them again rediscover the love that you once had that brought you together it's the same with Christ Christianity I say it and I say it and I say it it's relationship it's not ritual it's not religion and so if your relationship with God has been neglected your love for God will certainly have cooled if we have stopped reading taking time with him if we have stopped praying if we have stopped remembering what he has done for us we will certainly be cool towards him and Jesus says remember how it used to be when first

I saved you remember how you used to be in the word listening for my voice hanging on every word remember how you used to linger in conversation and prayer with me remember how your heart used to burn when you spent time in my presence remember how your first thought and your last word were of me remember how it used to be when you first loved me get back to that says trust do the things that you once did love me as I have loved and will always consistently unconditionally love you as my child and so

[70 : 25] Jesus command here is not a cold hard kind of decree it's it's the loving plea of a sperm spice remember repent resume so that's the command fourthly and fifthly it's just a word for each there's a caution if you do not repent this is verse five I will come to you and move your lampstand from his place see because the church is Jesus church he is the one who allows us the opportunity to worship and serve him and when we stop doing that we have no absolute right to continue being and calling ourselves his church whilst ever drifting from him and the story actually of the church in Ephesus is a tragic one it didn't have a happy end because he didn't repent and in one commentator's words it says the light they have flickered and eventually went out

I don't imagine it was like a switch suddenly being turned off the darkness began as their love for God started to decline and when the lampstand was finally removed the event was unnoticed by the church because they had already begun to adjust to the darkness so let the absence of the church in Ephesus serves a word caution to us we can't ever lose our salvation if we are God's children but we can lose our opportunity to be light in the darkness so there is that sobering word of caution and finally there's that encouraging word of commitment I'll just give it to you Jesus says to him who overcomes I will give the right to eat from the tree of life which is the paradise which is in the paradise of God and there's no time to explore this but here in the closing words of this letter to the church in Ephesus there's that reminder that the identity and the mission of the church is not limited to this world it's eternal and to those who overcome to those who persevere in loving and serving the Lord as he enables us we are given the firm promise of eating the story we're given that firm unqualified promise of the paradise of God so he who is in ear to hear verse 7 let them hear what the spirit says in churches heavenly father we thank you for your word and we pray that as we meditate upon it as we go from here that you would speak to each one of us as individuals who make up the church of

Jesus Christ or one small part of it in this place search us oh lord and know us we pray enable us to hear your voice and enable us to yield and not grieve the spirit as he works for us and we pray this

in Jesus name amen we send to conclude that hymn which John Murdo taught us a couple of weeks ago mission praise 1116 1116 words are on screen there is a higher throne and all this world is known where faithful ones from every tongue will one day come before the sun will stand they fall through the land believe in hearts find promised grace salvation comes it's that perspective into the eternal promise that we are given for those who are in Christ and we'll play it through once and then we'll stand to sing and I may the love of God the Father and fellowship with God the Holy Spirit be with us all both now and forevermore Amen