



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Revelation 3:7-13

"Kept from the Hour of Trial, part II"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We are studying the apocalypse, and we are in the section in which our Lord has written a letter to the church at Philadelphia, and because it contains a verse which is very important in the rapture controversy, we are taking two times on it rather than just one. Perhaps the wisest thing would be to skip it, because it is impossible to fully handle such a subject on a Sunday morning message even if we take two or three times. But that's what we are doing, and so our topic today will touch on the same thing that we did last week. But I want to read again the letter to the church at Philadelphia. So, turn with me to Revelation chapter 3 and verse 7, and we will read through verse 13. The apostle writes,

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship

before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. (Incidentally, we have not commented on this at all and will not other than this, but when you see that clause "and know that I have loved thee," it again is an implicit support for the idea that there are two kinds of love of God set forth in the word. There are some who are loved with elective grace, and there are others who are loved, but not with elective grace, and that of course is our Lord's meaning. It would of no meaning whatsoever if he loved everybody that same way.) Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

May the Lord bless this reading of his word. Let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Our Father, we approach Thee in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and we thank Thee that we have access through him. We give Thee thanks for all of the atoning work that he accomplished, by which we are enabled to stand before Thee in the grace and acceptance of a righteousness that is satisfying to Thee. We are indeed grateful and thankful and we worship Thee Lord for the greatness of Thy name and for the greatness of Thy work, the work of the triune God through Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We ask Thy blessing upon our country, especially upon the whole church of Jesus Christ today. And wherever the name of Christ is lifted up, may it be accompanied with the ministry of the Holy Spirit which makes and takes the things of Christ and brings them home to the hearts of men. We thank Thee and praise Thee for the eternal purpose

being worked out in harmony with Thy will and according to Thy purpose. We look forward to the completion, Lord, of all that Thou hast determined to do in Thy creation.

We pray for this particular church. We ask Thy blessing upon it, upon its leadership, upon the members, and upon the friends and those who are visitors today, we especially, Lord, ask Thy blessing upon them. May the word of God be helpful to them, and may the word point all of us to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who ministers to us out of his greatness, out of his love and compassion, the things that we individually need.

May our time together glorify Thy name, and we pray for those who are sick and unable to be with us, minister to them. Some who are suffering and suffering very deeply, we pray particularly for them. Encourage them and bless them. We are thinking particularly, Lord, of those who have requested our prayers. We pray, oh God that Thou wilt minister to them the things that they need, and through their friends and family and physicians and loved ones, may they be helped and encouraged, and if it be Thy will, healed.

We commit this time to Thee now, and pray Thy blessing upon us as we sing, and as we listen to the word of God for Jesus sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today is the same as our subject from last week, "Kept from the Hour of Trial." And what we are doing is really trying to complete our study of our Lord's letter to the church at Philadelphia but giving special stress to the rapture doctrine.

We have been trying to make these points; I hope we've succeeded fairly well. First of all, in case there are some here who were not here or maybe do not even know what the rapture doctrine is, when we use that term we are talking about the coming of our Lord for the church in which he will catch the church up to meet him in the air as the apostle describes it in 1 Thessalonians 4, the catching up of the whole body to meet our Lord in the air. And the question that is concerned with that great event is the time of

that rapture. We know that generally speaking, the future holds for us the Second Advent of our Lord and the kingdom of God upon the earth, but it also very plainly teaches, before the time of our Lord's coming to the earth there will be a time of great tribulation in which the judgments of God are poured out upon the earth, judgments that are described in the Old Testament, in our Lord's Olivet discourse in Matthew chapter 24 and chapter 25, in several places in Paul's writings, particularly in 2 Thessalonians, 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, 2 Thessalonians 1 and 2, and then preeminently in Revelation chapters 4 through 19. There the judgments are unfolded in great detail.

The question is, will our Lord come and catch the church up before that period of time known as the tribulation period, an approximately seven year period of time according to Daniel chapter 9? Or will he come after that period of time? Those who believe that Christ will come before that period of time are usually referred to as pre-tribulationists, that is, they believe that our Lord will come before that period. Those who believe that our Lord will come after that are called post tribulationists. You know, of course, what pre- and post mean. This is a controversy that largely is a controversy among pre-millennialists, that is, those who believe our Lord will come, and then the kingdom will follow his coming. But pre-tribulationists believe he will come in one stage before the tribulation period, and then in the final stage, at the conclusion, and following that the kingdom of God will come upon the earth. Amillennialists, that is, those who do not believe in a Millennium on the earth, an earthly Millennium, are almost always post-tribulationists, naturally.

Now the pre-tribulation doctrine that our Lord will come before the tribulation in one stage of his coming and follow it at the conclusion with the tribulation with his Second Advent to the earth, those who hold that doctrine recognize that that is a recent doctrine. It was first promulgated in the 19th century, and so it a relatively recent doctrine. As a matter of fact, it is associated almost entirely with those who hold to dispensational theology, which also is a recent doctrine. In other words, historic

orthodoxy in the Christian church, as that term is ordinarily understood has not held to either of those things, dispensational theology and the pre-tribulational rapture, which doesn't mean of course that they're not true, but nevertheless it is a recent teaching, both of them.

Now the issue is regarded as rather minor except by dispensationalists who think that it is fundamental to their doctrine that our Lord be recognized as having two elect people, Israel and the church, and two different programs with two sets of promises, promises for Israel and for the church and two separate destinies historically. So, there are some differences of opinion of course, but this is the historic view point. The ethnic future of Israel is a doctrine that is held by both pre-tribulationists and post tribulationists. That is, that Israel as a nation has a future.

Now there's a great deal of confusion and complexity in this issue, and my first feeling was that perhaps I should just skip it entirely on a Sunday morning message in which there will be individuals, such as there were at 8:30 who came in who for the first time were here. In fact, there was a lady and a young man who were from Germany, from near Frankfurt, the first time that they had been in, this did of course end properly or understand a whole lot of what I was talking about. And one might wonder, what's the point on Sunday morning? It's best studied at some other time in much more detail. I agree, but if I skipped it then someone will say then, "Well, why did you skip it?" And I cannot, of course, please everybody, and I thought perhaps it's good to at least touch upon it and sort of review the issues. I am sure that after this message, with some of you, I will be about as popular as Jerry Jones is in Dallas at the present time. [Laughter]

So, there is, I mentioned last Sunday, no undisputed text for either of these view points, almost all of the texts that are brought forward by those who stand on different sides of this issue are texts over which others have reason to debate. So, the result is that the issue is one that is decided largely by inferences drawn from specific texts and inferences drawn from presumed doctrines, that is presumed by those who want to draw

inferences favorable to their viewpoint, and they draw them from texts that they themselves presume are true, may even be true within their own particular theological environment. So, we acknowledge that there will be confusion as a result of what I will be saying, [Laughter] and if you are confused to some extent, at least, well, that is probably normal.

Some years ago, in 1981 to be exact, I was riding on Frontier Airlines, and Frontier, like most of the airlines, had a little book that they published every month in those days, and I was reading the book and there was an article in it by a school teacher, Bob Williams. He taught for twenty-one years in the St. Louis public school system. He said in this article that Mark Twain once said that, "the most interesting information comes from children, because they 'tell all they know and then stop.'" I'm not going to be a child today. I will probably tell you things that I think I know that I probably don't. But anyway, he went on to give some illustrations of what children do say, and they were rather humorous, and then one of them particularly pertains to the point, the pre-tribulational, post tribulational rapture dispute.

One of the children said, these were things that were said when the subject was aviation, he had been teaching them that. "When pilots do not want to say revolutions per minute they can say RPM," one of the kids says. "Sometimes I get to watch planes take off at the airport in our cities outer skirts," one of the kids says. "I was thinking business aircraft was the same as commercial aircraft when I learned different, all the thoughts that I was going to say went in a swallow down my throat." [Laughter] I like that expression, that's good. "One thing you should always do in finding directions from the North Star is hope its night time." [Laughter] "Here's one blockbuster of an idea," Mr. Williams says, "lost forever." One of the kids said, "One way we could always make sure anyone could learn to fly an airplane in just one day is, oh I forgot what I started to say." [Laughter] "In just a few short years, helicopters became a sensation overnight," one kid said. "Orville Wright was born in 1871," another one said, "supposedly on his birthday."

[Laughter] "They both live in pre-me times," one of the kids said. "Last year," Mr. Williams said, "a bright-eyed little historian wrote this obituary, 'Orville Wright expired in 1948 and later died from this.'" But this is the one that I particularly like. A little girl had been studying airplanes, and so she said, "Correct my being wrong, but tell me true or false. As an airplane is flying, does the high pressure air sweep over the plane's wing or under it? I wrecked my brain trying to think which." [Laughter]

Well, I liked that expression, "I wrecked my brain trying to think which," because I think that pertains to the rapture question. You can wreck your brain if you get too involved in the issue. Well, we were talking about arguments for the pre-tribulational rapture last time, and we talked the argument from immanency and tried to show that that's really not a valid argument if we understand immanency to mean that our Lord can return at any moment. And that is evident from the simple fact that Jesus told the apostles that the gospel would be preached in Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. So, it is evident that he presupposed a period of time in which the gospel ministry would be carried on. We mentioned the argument for the necessity of an interval between the rapture and the Second Advent. The reason this argument has some force is that most pre-millennialists will grant that in the kingdom of God upon the earth, there will be unbelieving individuals. That seems plain from Revelation chapter 20, for example.

Now if the Second Advent, when our Lord comes to the earth is to be identified with the rapture and the whole church is caught up to meet the Lord in the air, all of the believing church, then from whence will come the unbelievers who are in the kingdom of God if the kingdom of God immediately follows as they think. That argument is certainly a valid one to contemplate. Different answers have been proposed for it, but nevertheless it is an argument of some significance. We don't have time to talk about the ways in which it has been suggested that one might meet that particular objection if he were a post-tribulational rapturist.

There is also an argument from the apocalypse, and that's from our 10th verse here before us in which our Lord says, "Because you have kept the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Now, it's very interesting to notice in the Book of Revelation, the use of the term church. In these chapters, as you have noticed, in chapters 2 and 3 we've had numerous references to the church.

Each of the letters begins with a reference to the church. From chapter 4 in the Book of Revelation on to the end, there is only one reference to the term church and that is when John, near the end of his book, in the last section of it makes reference to the fact that what he is saying has been given to the churches. In other words, during the period of time in which the great judgments of God are being poured out upon the earth, there is no mention of the church upon the earth. So, it's natural for one to say, since the church is mentioned previously, but not during this time, is it not fair to say that we should regard therefore, the absence of the church as an indication of the church's rapture.

Now the expression is made in verse 10 that, "I will keep thee from the hour of testing that will come upon all the world." Before I mention that, I should have mentioned one other thing. You'll notice each of the letters of the church concludes with the statement, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Later on a very similar statement is made in chapter 13, verse 9 when after speaking about the revelation concerning the beast, John writes, "If any man have an ear, let him hear," but the words, "what the spirit said to the churches," are not there. Well, that would be also suitable for a pre-tribulational rapture. "If any man hath an ear, let him hear," because the church is not present during that time.

But we mention that the promise is that the church will be kept from the hour of testing. It would naturally, be of interest to interpreters to ask themselves the question, "Well, this expression, 'keep from' what does it strictly mean?" And therefore you would

be looking for other occurrences of that particular phrase in the word of God, particularly the New Testament, and you would discover that there is one other place where the expression "keep from" is used. It's in John chapter 17, verse 15 when our Lord in his upper room discourse, high priestly prayer says, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one." Now what our Lord is plainly saying is that he is praying for his apostles and others ultimately, and he is praying not that the father would take them out of the world physically, but that they should be kept from the evil. The expression in the original text, "to keep from," that is used in Revelation 3:10, is used here, and those two places are the only two places where that expression is found.

Pre-tribulationists argue that since, in chapter 17, "to keep from an evil one" is an absolute or complete separation from a threatening evil and the threatening evil incidentally is not the persecution of the world about them, but the threatening evil is apostasy as the text says. They should be kept from the evil one, context I think will make that rather plain. So the text then there means a complete separation from an impending or threatening evil, apostasy. In the Book of Revelation, it is not something spiritual, but something physical. And here, "to be kept from the hour of testing," is the hour of testing that shall come upon the whole inhabited world or earth to try those that dwell upon the earth.

The point pre-tribulationists like to make is, both of these text speak of a complete keeping. That is, a complete separation from the impending or threatening evil. And since in chapter 17, we do have that, although it is a spiritual threat, apostasy, the idea of a complete keeping is true to the text and therefore, in verse 10 of chapter 3 of the Book of Revelation, plainly about the tribulation that shall come upon the earth, we have a promise of a complete keeping from it. The post tribulationists believe that both of those promises are promises really, not of a complete separation from the threatening evil, but of God's undertaking to preserve believers through those particular evils. In

other words, post tribulationists say, "We will be upon the earth during the time of the judgments, perhaps, but God promises that we will be kept from the wrath of God poured out upon us which is going to be poured out upon others around us. So, it's a promise of keeping through the judgments that are to fall upon the earth.

Pre-tribulationists therefore like to say that this is a complete separation from the impending or threatening evil and not a partial one such as is mentioned. And they go on to point out that what our Lord says is not to keep through; he could have used that expression, "to keep through the hour of testing," but to keep from. Nor does he say to be taken out of, but he says to "be kept from," that is to be kept in an out from position. To be kept from means you will not enter into that period of time, so to be kept from is an absolute separation. They like to use such popular illustrations as, for example, the statements of a football coach to one of his players when a game approaches and the player may be, for example, injured, the question naturally is on the player's mind, "Am I going to play a bit, or a lot, or not at all?" And if the coach should say to him, "I'm going to keep you out of the game today." He would know that that meant, not that he was going to play for a little bit and be taken out, but it would mean that there was no need for him to suit up at all. He was not going to play. And so to be kept from is an absolute kind of keeping.

Some have objected to this and have said this is simply a promise to the church at Philadelphia, and so we shouldn't make a universal promise out of it. Well, of course as you know from your studies so far, every one of the letters ends with this statement, as does the church at Philadelphia, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches," plural. So, these promises were promises that were direct to individual churches, but they also are promises of general reference.

Now that is probably the strongest statement in support of the pre-tribulationist rapture that one could possibly find, and I know you're thinking what about the post-tribulationists? They must have something to say too. Well they surely do. I'm going to

just mention these arguments again and please remember that what I am mentioning is just something of a review and a survey of the arguments themselves, and not the answers and answers to answers that would be involved in a complete discussion of this issue.

One of the arguments that post tribulationists bring is an argument from 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, the very passage which describes the rapture of the church, they point out that the language of 1 Thessalonians 4 as well as 1 Thessalonians 5 is language that is very similar to the language of the Olivet discourse in which our Lord talks about the tribulation period and then talks about the Second Advent to the earth. Angels, clouds, trumpets, a gathering of the people, all of those figures are found in both of the contexts, and so the implication is to them that the contexts are similar doctrinally. That is the Olivet discourse plainly talks about the Second Advent, and then 1 Thessalonians 4 should be understood in a similar way and not of a pre-tribulation first stage coming of our Lord.

And they seek to underline it by pointing out the fact that in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, in the description of the return of our Lord it is stated in verse 17 of 1 Thessalonians 4, "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." And they point out that that noun that is used there and means meeting for a meeting with the Lord in the air, is used in ancient literature as well as in the New Testament in more than one place, at least two that I know of off hand without even looking at the concordance, of individuals going off to meet someone and coming back immediately to the place of origin.

For example, when Paul arrived in Rome, the saints went out to meet him, and then returned immediately to the place of origin. That word ordinarily means that, it is said. And here, when it says, they are caught up to meet the Lord in the air, the implication is not that they are going to stay in the air for a seven year period of time at least, but rather that they are going to return to the earth immediately for entrance into the millennial kingdom of our Lord. So, I think you can see that that's not a bad argument.

There is a further argument from 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 and 2. In chapter 1, Paul is describing the tribulation period of time and in verse 7 he says, "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels." In other words, he promises the church rest, but its rest at the time of the Second Advent, and the church apparently is still upon the earth. Going on to the 2nd chapter and underling in what are his words, "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him." In other words, the time of the coming and the gathering together, there are reasons from the Greek text to indicate this is one event, his coming and our gathering together to him. As Paul says, "We beseech you by this that you be not soon shaken in mind."

But then in the 8th verse, using the same word for coming that he used in verse one he says, "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming," clearly a reference to the Second Advent, not the first rapture, the first stage of a two stage coming. It is a reference clearly to the Second Advent to the earth, and yet in the first verse he has said, we beseech you brethren by the coming of our Lord Jesus and our gathering together unto him. So, it would appear that the coming of the Lord and the gathering together of the church to him is shown to be, clearly, at the time of the Second Advent.

Another argument that is sometimes looked over, but I happen to be interested in it, because one of the things I've been interested in for a long time is the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament. This argument is not as popular as I should be, I think, for that very reason. But the apostle in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 in verse 51 and 52 says, speaking of a coming of the Lord; let me read beginning in verse 50. Paul says, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed,"

a clear reference to rapture, "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

Now the point that I want to make is simply this. This is the coming of our Lord. The text however, in verse 54 contains a reference to Isaiah chapter 25, in verse 8. "Death is swallowed up in victory." But when one looks at the context of Isaiah 25, verse 8 its plain, and I don't think there's any debate about this at all, that the context is the Second Advent to the earth.

Now, if that is true, then what it is that Paul is talking about here in 1 Corinthians 15 is a rapture all right, but it's a rapture that takes place at the time of the Second Advent to the earth. Furthermore, this might be called another argument from the apocalypse. I won't call it that, but it's related to it. As you know, the apostle says, the Apostle Paul says that at the rapture a resurrection takes place. In other words, the resurrection of believers if they are caught up to meet the Lord in the air at the first stage, if the rapture takes place then, the resurrection of the body also takes place at that time. In other words, what I am saying is simply this, that the rapture is the time of the resurrection of the body. That, it seems very plain from 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15, however in the Book of Revelation, in chapter 20, a chapter we shall study in some detail later on, it's very plain that in chapter 20, verse 4 the first resurrection is post tribulational. Now if the first resurrection is post tribulational, and if the rapture occurs at the time of the resurrection of the body, then of course you must have a post tribulational rapture.

Well I think you can see why an individual who studies the rapture doctrine and studies it just lightly or listens to a couple of brief surveys as I have given to you will "wreck his brain" trying to think of which of these is true. So, we are going to leave it at that and let you study it and make up your mind. If you want to know what my view is,

you can come to me sometime, and I will be happy to talk to you a little bit about it. Let me finish the letter, because I think that's important.

The Lord after giving this great promise of being kept from the hour of trial which is going to be universal over the earth, in verse 11 exhorts the believers by saying to them in chapter 3, "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Now you can see that this is a warning, not a loss of salvation, but a loss of reward. It's a warning of the loss of ones crown not the loss of his spiritual life. It is possible of course to lose, and to lose in the sense of lost opportunity to respond to the gospel, and it's also possible to lose opportunities as believers as well.

Let me just give you some illustrations. Esau lost his birthright to Jacob. He lost his place before God to Jacob. Reuben, who was the eldest of Jacob's sons, lost his place to Judah. Saul lost his place to David be failure; Shebna to Eliakim, as we studied last week. Joab and Abiather to Benaiah and Zadok as you discover in 1 Kings. Judas lost his place in the apostolic band to Matthias. Judas, I do not think was a true believer, but he lost his position as an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. And of course, Israel for a time at least, has lost her place to the Gentiles, for our Lord had said that he was going to take the kingdom of God from them and give it to a nation that would bring forth the fruits thereof. So, the warning that our Lord gives, "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown," is a warning that all of us should take very seriously.

And finally, in verses 12 and 13, we have the promise to the individual. "He that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God." The overcomer, we are understanding, as a believing man that from chapter 21, verse 7 and verse 8; so, the one who overcomes, the believing individual, our Lord promises to make a pillar in the temple of my God. Philadelphia was a place with many temple and many pillars in the temples, but furthermore, Philadelphia was a city of earthquakes. Strebel the historian said of Philadelphia that it was, "a city of earthquakes."

Now in those days when an individual experienced an earthquake, because the buildings easily fell, it was very dangerous to be in the city and particularly in Philadelphia where tremors were frequent. Individuals got in the habit of immediately gathering a few things together and racing outside the city for protection. So, the promise is very apropos. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God and he shall go no more out." No need to rush out, because now he has security, not even a Samson could pull down the pillars of the temple of God.

Second, he says, "I will write upon him the name of my God." That suggests ownership, they will belong to him. There have been many different ways to try explain what is meant by "writing upon him the name of my God," among them the branding of slaves. If that's the figure in our Lord's mind, it simply means that we will belong to him in that figurative sense. It is the sense that we belong to him forever. We are his possession. Not only that he says, "And the name of the city of my God, which is the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God." And that suggests the heavenly citizenship of the believer, what Paul speaks about in Philippians chapter 3 when he says, "Our citizenship is in heaven; from whence we also we expect the Savior: Who shall transform our vile body," our body of humiliation, "and make it unto a body like unto his own glorious body." So, heavenly citizenship is suggested by that.

And finally, in the 12th verse he says, "I will write upon him my new name." I think it's rather striking too, that he mentions a new name, changed names. Philadelphia's name, incidentally, changed at least twice just before the writing of this particular letter. It was named Philadelphia and then because one of the Roman emperors was instrumental in building up the city after the great earthquake of 17 AD, they renamed the city after Tiberius, and they called it New Caesar that is that town Neo Caesarea. And then later on it was named after another one of the Roman emperors, it was named Flavia. So, they knew what it was to have change of names, and our Lord says here, "I will write upon him my new name."

One cannot help, but lay stress again on the importance of fidelity in the Christian life. I notice in verse 8 he says, "Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word," and then in verse 10, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience." The test of the church is loyalty to Christ, it's very important. You know when I think of Believers Chapel I think that has some very practical applications to us. Let me just be very practical. We have a difficulty getting people to work in the nursery. Isn't that interesting?

Here's a Christian church that is in a position of representing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, hearing constantly about the need and the opportunity and the privilege of Christian service, and we cannot get anyone to work in the nursery. That's astonishing. That's really astonishing. That's something we should be ashamed of. That's something as Christians we should never let happen. This is a service to the Lord, and if we are going to be faithful to our Lord a little thing like that is very important. I confess it embarrasses me. It embarrasses me when we have to make announcements that again we have need of someone to work in the nursery, and especially since it is one hour, and I don't know I forgotten whether it's in two or three months. One hour, think of it.

That's a rather small thing, but so important for the well being of this church, because when individuals bring in their little ones, I confess, if I had come in with my little children and had seen that in the nursery we have poor accommodations and poor faithfulness in caring for them, that would be a very big stumbling block for my fellowship with a group of believers who manifest by their activities that they don't really care significantly about something that is very important. So, I think our Lord's words to the church at Philadelphia have some application to us.

He praised them for the fact that they had kept his word. He said, "You have a little strength," which we said was numbers, a few numbers, but nevertheless, they had kept his word and not denied his name. May the Lord speak to us along those lines as well.

And finally, regardless of whether we like to call ourselves pre-tribulationists or post tribulationists, let us remember that if we are earnest, zealous, sincere believers in Jesus Christ, regardless of that view that we might hold concerning the rapture, we'll look forward with great interest and hope to the future for our Lord, as he says, comes quickly. Post tribulationists should look forward to the coming of the Lord. Pre tribulationist should look forward to the coming of the Lord. Together, as a church, we look forward to the coming of the Lord. The chances are that the details of the Second Advent of our Lord, the rapture, are going to be somewhat different than the descriptions of those events that our best Bible teachers give us. Let's remember the important thing is, he's coming, and we have an opportunity now to serve him in an effective way, and may we not lost the opportunities that we have. Oh, that no one should take your crown.

If you are here today and you've never believed in Christ, we remind you that he has suffered an atoning death for sinners, but the gospel message is addresses to all, and if God in his grace has shown you your own sin, then Christ's death is for you, for it's for sinners. Come to Christ. Confess your sins and need and receive the free gift of eternal life which he has bought with no cheap blood, the precious blood of the second person of the trinity. May God help you to come to him. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are indeed grateful to Thee for the word of God, and the way in which it speaks to our needs. We have so many needs, we fail so frequently. Lord, forgive us our sins. Forgive us our lethargy, our indifference. May, by Thy grace, we have our priorities arranged in a way that is pleasing to Thee.

And Lord, if there should be someone here who has not believed in Christ, may at this very moment they turn in their hearts to Thee, confess their need, give thanks to Thee for the Savior who offered the saving sacrifice, and by Thy grace receive him as their own. Go with us now as we leave this auditorium.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.