

EPS Spring Conference 2014

**East London Christian Fellowship Centre
Friday 18 - Saturday 19 April 2014**

English Transcripts

This document contains the four talks at the EPS Spring Conference 2014 on the topic of “God’s calling of the Church”.

Audio recordings of the talks in Cantonese and English are also available for download.

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Friday 18 April 2014 – Morning

Introduction – Thomas Yeung

Good morning brothers, sisters and friends. We welcome brothers and sisters from Southampton, Portsmouth, Hong Kong and around the world to East London Christian Fellowship Centre. We welcome you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Before we have our messages, let us commit the time before the lord – let us pray.

*Dear Lord, we thank you that you have given brothers and sisters and gospel friends the opportunity to experience Your grace and mercy upon us. We ask that the Holy Spirit will do His great work amongst us in our hearts, and prepare His church for the coming of the Lord. We bow in worship because those who trust in the Lord will not be put to shame. May all that should be rendered to you be rendered to you. Lord we pray that we are not here to meet with man but with you, the Lord. May you receive all the glory and all our hearts.
Amen.*

Today, I remembered that this is the spring conference. We have a summer conference and a winter conference; we don't seem to have an autumn conference. There's a Chinese saying that: "when you have lovers coming together, if you have missed each other for a day, it's as if you've missed each other for three autumns". But some of us brothers and sisters have not seen each other for more than three autumns! I wonder what we feel when we see each other again. It might be to apologise because I have forgotten your name! So not to embarrass you his name is Michael, and his name is Thomas!

In the early church, when brothers and sisters met with each other, the first greeting when they met was not: "Have you had breakfast?" or "How is your health?" No, when they greeted one another they would greet as in Corinthians, "Maranatha" which means "Come Lord Jesus". We pray that through the two days of conference the Lord can cause there to be fruit, to quicken the coming of the Lord again.

Brothers and sisters, there are over 100 people here. When people gather together we know that there will be problems – people problems. Especially when we are sitting so closely together – there may be some sparks. "Wow, he calls himself a believer, how can they behave like this?" There is still the flavour of the old Adam.

But this is the body of Christ. This conference's theme is the calling of God to the Church, God's eternal purpose. We very easily call it the Church but if we cannot see the person sat next to us as a member of the same body of Christ we cannot even begin to talk about the Church. So we need to learn to treasure and protect each other as members of one body.

Although we are happy to see each other today, we need to learn to love, forbear with, have patience with one another at this time. Perhaps there are some unfamiliar faces amongst us. But if we are believers this is what we must learn.

Hymns – Jason Teoh

Good morning everyone, I think it's wonderful that we can come and gather as three churches in the presence of God. I just wanted to start with a verse in Matthew 18.20: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name I am in their midst".

This is a wonderful verse isn't it? Where two or three Christians are gathered together, God is there too. Today we have two or three churches and friends too, and we know that God is also with us today.

I was trying to reflect back over the conferences we have had before. The last conference that we had was in 2008, when all three churches got together. I had a quick search and managed to find some photos. So much has changed since then. Six years ago, I hadn't started work yet, I was thinner, had more hair! Some people like Michael still looked youthful, and some people like Uncle Edmond didn't qualify to sit at the senior citizen's table at dinner!

But despite the passing of time, God is still here and that's what draws us together. Even though it might have been six years and we might have forgotten each other's names, God has still drawn us together here today.

The first hymn (As we are gathered) talks about how we are all gathered together because Jesus has brought us together. Even though we are from three churches and from around the world, we have been joined by the spirit and washed in Jesus' blood and we're part of one body and part of the Church. Let us sing it twice.

The second hymn I have chosen is: In the Image of God. Each and every one of us has been created in the image of God, no matter where we're from. We've been created to show God's glory, and although we know we aren't perfect, although like sheep we've gone astray and we don't always show God's glory, even though we've failed God, He still has His plan and His purpose for all of us. He has a plan and a purpose for each of us individually, but more importantly a plan for us as a church too.

He sent His son to this earth so that we might be able to be in the image of God. The second verse talks about how we should want to live in His image and for him. If we know we have been created in His image and know we have been perfected by His blood, it's important that we should be living for our Lord, and living in His image. Let us sing this hymn together, and then pass the time over to the speaker.

Message – Sanny Teoh

Indeed we do thank God for giving us this opportunity before him. From what has been said, we know the theme of these two days is the calling of God. I hope we haven't come here just thinking we will come and just hear what the brothers have to say. We need to God to speak to us; we need His enlightening to know His calling for each individual and the calling to the Church.

We need His enlightenment because His calling to us is very specific. This understanding does not come from man or from any of us; we need to hear God Himself calling each and every one of us – that is what it is all about.

Obviously, the calling of God is a very broad topic and there are many aspects to it. It is important to know that in His calling God has His purpose and His will.

Why God created us

Nowadays, I seldom hear people asking "what is my purpose?" or "why am I here?" Our lives are so preoccupied with many things that we have no time to think about things like this. Young people are

so preoccupied with their electronic devices. We are taken up with so many things that “why we are here” is not a question that comes up anymore.

I think it’ll be good for us to go back to why God has created us. We have just sung about how we have been created in the image of God. When He created us He must have had something in mind – so what is this that He has in mind?

Some of us might be familiar with these questions or thoughts, but even so we need God to refresh us in knowing and seeing the calling of God. We need to see that in creating us He has a very specific purpose. And as the hymn tells us, we failed that purpose. Yet, God did not give up this thought of His – the thought for man that He had created. So we need to go back to the beginning to find out why God created us, and this will be in Genesis

Genesis 1:1-3

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.

Genesis 1:6-8

Then God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” God made the expanse and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so. God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

Genesis 1:9-13

Then God said, “Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear”; and it was so. God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them”, and it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good. There was evening and there was morning, a third day.

These are day 1, 2 and 3 of creation. Then we read in verse 14-19 the fourth day, in verses 20-23 the fifth day.

Now verses 24-25 are about the sixth day of creation.

Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind”; and it was so. God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good.

Now verse 26 is about man.

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth”.

Planned before the foundation of the world

So we see how on the sixth day God created man in His likeness and in His image. I don’t know about you, but when we read the story of creation do we think that “Oh, God has created this world

and He needs someone to take care of it?” Did God create man to rule over all of this? Was that the thought that God has? This is not the case. I think more and more that the world was created because God wanted to create Man.

You might ask, are you sure? Don't ask me... in fact ask parents. I know that there is a baby coming soon in the East London church. I know that as expectant parents they need to prepare the nursery, the cot, and the baby clothes – everything the baby needs before it even comes. It's not a case of “Oh we have a nursery and a cot, maybe we should have a baby!” This is not the case; it would be very unusual if it was.

Normally, parents know the baby is coming, and they begin to prepare everything for the baby. In the same way, God's intention was to create Man; so He created heaven and earth for Man. It's not that Man was made for heaven and earth. This is why we read in the Bible: *man was not made for Sabbath, Sabbath was made for man*. In the same way, we can see that man was not made for creation, creation was made for man. In this we can see that God must have a purpose or a plan for the creation of Man.

We can read in the book of Ephesians 1:3-4. It gives us a deeper impression that this must be the case.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

Before the foundation of this world, before the creation of this world, God had us in mind. The creation of Man is a very important aspect of His will. These verse shows that Heaven and Earth were created for Man, and God must have something in mind for His creation of Man, and we also know that creation was so that man may know him through His creation.

Man's part in God's creation

Just now we sang about manifesting God's glory. I don't know how you imagine God's glory, but as the hymn says: “Heaven declares the glory of God”. It's true if we consider this universe and nature, we see how vast and amazing it is; there are so many amazing things in God's creation, and we realise how great and majestic God's splendour is.

But because we know what God can do, does not mean that we will really know what God is really like. I think this is where Man comes in in God's creation. When we look at heaven, earth and the universe, we can somehow understand the greatness and wonder of God.

This is only one aspect of His glory. Just because we know what He has done, doesn't mean we know who He is. But God's heart is that in creation He is to be known – not just for man, but by all creation. How else will we know of God's holiness, love, truthfulness and faithfulness? We won't be able to by looking at the stars. But God's intention is so that when looking at the man God has created in His image we can look and know God's nature.

This is why Man is so important in this creation. God has something very specific in mind for man. We see that God's heart for man is not only to reveal God through him, but that he will also acquire the very nature of God.

Our rejection of God's absolute authority

We know in the story of Genesis, before Man could develop and fulfil what God has in mind, he fell in sin. For man to know God and be able to reflect what God is like he has to be completely and totally under God's rule. Although Man ruled over the earth, God intended that it has to come under God's absolute rule. When Man disobeyed, he has rejected the absolute rule of God. When this happened he could no longer rule with the authority of God. The harmony of God's rule had been destroyed through that.

Sometimes people ask, "Why is it so serious? They just ate a fruit?" The seriousness is not in the eating, it is in the rejection of the absolute authority of God. That is the serious of Man's sin.

In fact, if we read the word of God, we will soon discover that God wishes to give to us more than he wants to restrict us. But when God restricts us there is a very specific purpose to why he does it. When we think about the temptation from the serpent, "Does God say do not eat? Does He say that if you eat you will die? It's not really true..." we think that God wants to keep something from us, to keep us in the dark about some truth or some knowledge. This is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But it's not the case that God is hiding something from us. God wants us to know ultimately good and evil as He sees it, not as the devil sees it.

If you ask a sinful man about good and evil and how he sees it, it will be very different to how a righteous man sees it. God sees good and evil is very differently to how the devil sees it. For Man to see good and evil as how God sees it, Man must be fully subjected to the authority of God. But foolishly they took the serpent's word and rejected the absolute authority of God. What they would have learned about good and evil of God, and from God, was lost. And so this put off God's plan for Man.

God's recovery of Man

If you were God, what might you think? We thank God that He didn't write us off. God, who had created Man, has set His love upon him. When we read in Jerimiah: "*I have loved you with an everlasting love*", it's not just a love at the point of Jesus dying for us. God put His love on us when He created us, and having done so He declared that it as an everlasting love. Hence, the fall was not the end of man.

God had to come up with something else to recover man from his downfall. This is indeed a wonderful and amazing thought. We do not understand sometimes why God should love man in such a way. In the New Testament it says God is love and He has loved us with an everlasting love.

When we think about it we have to admit we cannot understand. Our reaction would have been: "I will start over again; I will not bother with you". But it was not so for God. In the story of Genesis, we already see how God's heart is even towards the fallen man; to recover him, to save him, and put him back on course according to His plan.

In Genesis we see that part of God's plan was to clothe them. This is not just about God making a coat of skin for them; it tells us that an innocent creature had to be slain. Blood had to be shed, and so the principle of sacrifice was established. This points to how the Lord was preparing us for our salvation.

We also read about how God cast out man from Eden, and then set cherubim so Man has no way back to the tree of life. We might think that God is a bit nasty; we thought that He should give us a

second chance – after all, we just said He wants to recover us, and it seems a bit harsh to be stopped from reaching the tree of life.

But do we know that if God had not done that, we would have had to live in sin forever – severed with nothing to do with God? When God did this, blocking the way to the tree of life, it was He did not want Man to have no way back to God and to be perpetually in sin. God's heart is that we should live as those not in sin. God has to bring about salvation to redeem us from our downfall.

We find that when we read God's word there are things we do not understand, things we do not see clearly, but what we must never do is doubt God. Even if we see something we don't understand, don't ever doubt him – because God knows what He is doing, we do not. Thank God, He knows what He is doing, and He doesn't want us to doubt him.

God has a very high purpose and He wants to work it out in us. We should know that from the fall God has been working out the plan of redemption and this purpose. But this was not just an afterthought after the fall. God already knew and had prepared way before.

We find after the fall of Adam came the call of man. In Genesis, this is the first calling of man. When they fell and God came looking and they hid themselves, God said: "Why are you hiding, where are you?"

Why did God ask that? Did God not know they had fallen? Did God not know where they were hiding? When God called out to them and asked where they were, it shows that God is the one who has come to seek us out. The ones who had fallen away, He comes to seek us out. That is why it says the Son of Man came to seek and to save those who were lost, to seek us – the fallen man. The Lord's coming is to fulfil God's heart – even to the fallen Man, and He would not give up His intention that he had right from the beginning when He created Man. This is why God was calling out after Adam.

We don't have the time to go through the whole Old Testament, but we know that even from the calling of Abraham, to the calling of the nation of Israel, all this calling is leading up to the coming of Jesus. It is in Jesus's coming that God is able to bring about the redemption of man. That redemption is there to put man back on course with what God wants; that Man who God had set His love on, where God loves him, and also wants him to love God back.

So it is a relationship which God has in mind, and Man lost it when he disobeyed God. God wants to recover that relationship which has been lost. The calling of His chosen people Israel was in preparation of the coming of the Lord Jesus, so that when He came He was able to fulfil the recovery of man.

Salvation through Jesus Christ

Today, we should treasure the fact that we have this salvation in Christ. God's saving us, not just to save us from hell, but actually to put us back on course for what He wants. Yes God today has called each one of us individually so that in Christ we might be saved. But God is not content with that. God knows that in order for what he wants for Man to be fulfilled, it is not just to be recovered by salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ, but also to be reunited with His Son, in oneness.

As we come to the New Testament, we know how important salvation is to all of us. Salvation comes to each of us all individually. I can't be saved for you; you can't be saved for me. Each of us has to make the choice; each of us has to take the step. As each of us takes the step, we are

stepping towards what God has in mind. It is no longer a case of just each of us; it is to do with what we see today as the Church. God saved us, but that is not the only thing He has in mind. God has in mind His Church, the Church which has come about through His son. Our calling is very much to do with the calling of the Church, with the building of the Church.

In Matthew 16:13-18 we see a conversation that Jesus had with Peter.

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and bloody did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

Here we have the Lord asking "who does man say that I am?" Obviously, the answer came in verse 14, but the Lord is actually more interested in what the disciples think. Simon Peter was very quick in saying that "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God". And then the Lord says to him "you are blessed". Why? Because it is not flesh and blood that has revealed these things to him, but it is God the Father who is in the heavens.

This is what we need. For any of us who has been saved and knows who the Lord Jesus is, it's not because we have been introduced to Him by someone. Yes, the Gospel may have been preached to us by someone, but it's God's very own working which reveals who Christ is to us. As God calls each one of us, God is doing that work of revelation of who Christ is in our heart, so that the certainty of our salvation does not rest on anything but the fact that it has been revealed to us by God. That is why our salvation should be very certain. If it comes about by any other means then we are on shaky ground. When God calls us into salvation He does a very definite job of calling us to him, and He calls all of us specifically.

Building of the Church on Jesus Christ

But we know that when the Lord speaks of Salvation, even here to Peter, He says: "I will build my church". Our salvation is very much tied up with the building of the Church. Even in these two verses. The Lord says Simon, but then refers to him as Peter – the name the Lord gave him. This name is very much tied up with God's calling. He was Simon Barjona, but then becomes Peter, through God's calling. All this is tied up the calling of the Lord, and His calling is tied up in the building up of the Church.

But this is not unique or specific to Peter. It is for each of us who have been saved, who have heard the calling of God and have responded to him. What the Lord said to Peter, the Lord is saying to us.

There are some who think that "this rock" is referring to Peter. It is not so. First of all, Peter is not the rock, he is just a stone. The rock is the Lord Himself, and the Lord will build the Church upon Himself. Peter could not do that. Only on what the Lord has done in salvation can the Church be built. The church comes about through what the Lord did in salvation. So if we have been saved, then we are part of the Church. As brother pointed out earlier, we are members of the Church.

It doesn't matter how unbecoming we are, the Lord is still saying this. When the Lord said this to Peter, was he perfect? No, we find that it didn't take long before the Lord had to rebuke him again. We find that this is what the Lord has in mind for Peter and for us. So don't be confused that Peter

is the rock on which the Church will be built. Let us read it carefully again: *“I say unto you: Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church”*.

We must not be mistaken about Peter being the rock – it is important. The Lord is referring to Himself when He says on this rock. He is referring to Himself, the very basis of salvation, through which the Church will come about, which the Lord will be building.

Our salvation is very much tied up with the building of the Church. The church is very much in the heart and mind of the Lord. For all of us who are saved, we must recognise this, how urgent His heart is towards us, His church.

Importance of the Church

I remember a young brother, as a young Christian was among a group of brothers who were talking. In the midst of the conversation they mentioned a verse in 2 Timothy 2:22: *“Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”*

It was at this time that this brother suddenly realised, it was not meant for him to be a Christian all on his own. What God has in mind was for him to pursue with other brothers and sisters out of a pure heart. What God is after is not just him and how good a Christian he is, but God’s heart is in His church, and the brother realised how he was supposed to be a part of that.

If he is to grow, he is meant to grow in the Church; if he is to serve, it’s meant to be in the Church; if he is to pursue it is with others who are pure of heart. It was a real eye opener for the brother – he cannot be a the Christian that God wants by walking alone; he can only be a Christian that God is after by being a part of the Church, by pursuing and serving in the Church.

Later on this brother said to the sister, who was later to be his wife and at the time they were contemplating marriage, *“This is how it has to be - God first, then brothers and sisters, then you”*. This is not easy to swallow for the sister. She would think, *“I am not marrying the Church, I marrying you. I can understand God coming first, but brothers and sisters?”* Yes, it is not easy for the sister to follow, but he wanted her to realise how important the Church is to the purpose of God. He knew that this might offend the sister, he also knew that if God had put them together and intended for them to serve together then he didn’t need to worry – it shouldn’t put the sister off too much.

I have heard a great deal about many brothers and sisters who had served the Lord. Then even their shadow cannot be seen in the Church when they got married. It is so easy to serve the Lord, and then you get married and have your own life. It is not meant to be like that, God has put us together to serve in the Church – so Church still comes before you and me. This is how the brother realised how important the Church is in the sight of God.

God’s calling to us

Sometimes we do not appreciate God’s calling and what it actually involves. That’s why we need God to enlighten us; we need God to give to us the spirit of wisdom and revelation. It is not what man can tell us about God’s calling, but we need to God to enlighten us from within. Our conviction is not how well others can tell us something, or because someone has been so convincing or so rational in their thinking about what God wants. But it comes when God has enlightened us. Often when God enlightens us we find that there is no rational thinking, you do not know why, but you are

convicted. And you find that you have to submit to it, you have to lay hold of it, and that is the work that we need God to do in us, and in our midst.

We need to pray for ourselves, for our young people. Otherwise the calling of God is just a slogan or a phrase. We can talk about it, but we never really have the conviction inside. We need God's enlightening within. Even though there is no rationale, we know that God has said something – He has said something to me. Don't ask me to explain, I can't. But I know that God's conviction is real – it's very real. We need to know God's specific calling in us and what He is calling us to.

Today God's calling, God's heart and mind, is very much in the Church. Do you know why? In the Old Testament God's calling was to prepare for the Lord's coming. Today the Lord's calling is the same; it is also preparing for the Lord's coming – not His first coming, but for His second coming; not as a saviour, but as a King. This is why the calling of the Church is so vital because it is tied into preparing for the second coming of the Lord.

What God wants to do in the Church is not anything less than preparing for the Son's return. But how much of this really catches and lays hold of our hearts?

Communion with God

In the Old Testament we read how God instructed the Israelites to build the Tabernacle and the temple. We might say that this is the centre of the Israelite's worship. But what God really has in mind is to dwell in their midst. For God to be among them, God had to set up something among them to fulfil some measure of this heart.

As we have said, God created us for the purpose that His glory and His power might be made known through His creation. In Ephesians you'll see that thought is very specifically there: God has in His mind that He wants to be with Man, and to have relationship with Man. When God created Man, He did not give us a pile of manuals or user guides, to tell us what He is like. No, as far as God is concerned you can't learn from a manual - that is not the way. What God wants is have a relationship with Man. It is through His communion with Man that we can really come to know who God really is; not just to know Him in our head, but a deeper knowing that will transform Man to be more like God.

Today we know that through the Church God is still working this out. God wants to be with His people so that they may know Him, and through their knowing Him, that He might be known to the nations. So what God had in mind when man had failed, God is now bringing this through the Church. What God intends to do in the Church is to bring about the second coming of the Lord.

The hope of our calling

The hymn we sang this morning has that hint, and if we read the New Testament, we find that this thought of the second coming of the Lord is meant to be very much in the Church. In Ephesians we read that it says: *"that we may be enlightened of the hope of our calling"*. What exactly is the hope of our calling if it is not tied to the coming of the Lord?

In the New Testament, when we read about the salvation of His people, we always read the phrase: *"awaiting the coming of the Lord"*. This is very much our hope – it should be the hope of our calling, the hope of the Lord's return, when God will fully accomplish what He intends.

Our hope is not like the hope of man. The hope of man is that “I wish it will happen”, or “if I cross my fingers long enough, maybe it will happen”! Man’s hope is based on fate and fortune. But for the Church, for Christians, our hope is in God Himself. As I often say to brothers and sisters, you know that man’s hope has no certainty, but the Christian’s hope is a certainty.

We read in Romans it says “Hope that is seen is not hope, but we hope for that is to come”. But that which is to come is a certainty. So, a Christian’s hope is a certainty; we are just waiting for it to happen. God will do it, the Lord will come, the Lord will return. God’s work in the Church is very much preparing for that. So don’t think that we if don’t have enough hope then the Lord may not return. No, our hope is that we are looking forward to the certainty of the Lord’s return. This is the Christian’s hope. The Christian’s hope is always a certainty because it is based on God. Man’s hope isn’t – it may or may not happen. If you are lucky it will happen, if you are not lucky, then tough luck.

We thank God that when he tells us that we have a certain hope, a hope that will surely come. So it is up to us to wait as God would want us to.

Demonstrating God’s all in all

I think it’s best to end with some reading of God’s word from 2 Peter 1:5-8.

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and if your moral excellence, knowledge, and in our knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

How we need the Lord’s mercy. We can know these things, we may hear these things, but the Lord says that we can still be unfruitful. We thank God that He would have us know these things. He would want to enlighten us of these things, and it is not in the heart of God for us to be unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

We know that often we fall far short of what God wants. We thank God that He has purposed something especially for us, in Christ. It is not only to save us, but for us to become one in Him. When God set Man to rule on earth, it was only a very minor reflection of what God had in mind for him because, in Christ, what God has in mind for us surpasses Man’s rule on earth.

We read in 1 Corinthians 15 or in Ephesians, that God is meant to fill All in All. That’s the final display of what God is. When the Lord returns, when the enemy has been dealt with, the final show of what it means for God to be All in All will come about. When the Lord will subject everything under the Father and God will be seen as All in All. That is God’s heart; God wants that to happen and Man has a great part in it. God having purposed this for us will make it happen. Although we have to admit that we do fail, it will come about. But may the Lord help us, as we know that what He intends, He will not let fail.

Let us end in prayer.

Lord, as we come before you, we again look upon your mercy. On one hand we know how great and wonderful the thing is that you have been prepared for man, but on the other hand we know what a failure we are. We know how far we are from the Glory of God filling the Church. But we thank you that you have purposed you will surely fulfil.

We also thank you that we believe that for each one of us, no matter what condition or situation we find ourselves in, we know you love us. For each one of us sat here, you love us. Lord we pray that your love will urge you to do the work which no man can do. From our Gospel friends, to our children, and for also for those of us who have known you for some time, we know we have need of your spirit to enlighten us. If it was not for your love we would not be here today. May we pray that your love will urge you, that your Holy Spirit will do the work that no man may do?

We again commit our meetings this afternoon and tomorrow into your hands, and we pray that your Holy Spirit may work in us. For those who are unwell or tired, we pray you will strengthen our inner man, that as we come before you we may hear a word or two.

We pray in the name of the Lord Jesus, Amen.

Friday 18 April 2014 – Afternoon

Hymns – Thomas Yeung

Good afternoon brothers and sisters and friends. I wonder whether after you have had the fungus and chicken whether you have further appetite for heavenly manna! We pray that we won't be too full!

Before the message we shall sing two hymns together. The first hymn is "Hast thou heard Him, seen Him, known Him". In a moment Brother Wong will be sharing with us the situation in the church of Ephesus. The Lord rebuked the church of Ephesus because they had forsaken their first love to the Lord. This love, in one aspect, talks about the initial love that we had to the Lord; the zeal and purity that we had towards the Lord. But gradually over time our love for the Lord has grown cold and fallen back to a point where we have pitched our tent towards Sodom and Gomorrah.

Another aspect is when the Lord asked Peter, "*Do you love me more than these*"? Brothers and sisters, do we love people, things of this earth, more than the Lord Jesus? Have we put all these people, things and matters before the Lord Himself? In other words, is the Lord Jesus Himself, like the words of this hymn, being ordered as the number one in our lives?

The book of Colossians tells us that the Lord has to be supreme above all things. But in all of these things, people and matters, where is the Lord? Are our children the first priority? Are our wives or husband ordered as the next priority? Or is your career, or even your spiritual knowledge, is that taking the first priority in your life? Where is the Lord Jesus Christ in your life? Where is that is the first love?

This hymn is very precious, may the spirit of the Lord really touch us as we pay attention to the words of this hymn.

The second hymn (...) is one not many have sung before, but this is a wonderful hymn that I love very much. We give thanks to our Lord because although we might cast aside our first love, but the love our Lord Jesus Christ towards us will never be put aside.

Brothers and sisters, do you know how God loves us? It is very clear from the Gospel of John Chapter 17 how God loves the Lord Jesus, and God uses the same love to love each one of us. John says, "God loves us just the same way that he loves the Son". Brothers and sisters, let me ask you a question, would God cast aside His love to His Son? If God would not cast aside His first love towards His only begotten Son, then in the same way God will not cast aside the first love, which existed before the foundation of the world, towards us. The waves at the lake of Tiberius continue to spur Peter on, and the same tide of love constrains us today.

Brothers and sisters, as in the hymn, there may be many strong fortresses that have not been taken down by God. We have many things that hinder us; there are many barriers, many emotions, many thoughts, many ideas that the Lord has not captured yet, and many likes which we have not put on God Himself. But we give thanks to God that His love is like the mighty waves that continue to sweep over us to take down all of those barriers.

God will never give up those that He has loved from the beginning. May the love of the Lord capture every one of us at the conference.

Message – David Wong

Good afternoon everyone. Let's bow for prayer.

Lord, we give You thanks and we ask for Your presence among us. We thank You for Your eternal love that You put into your beloved – us.

Lord, we would like to be like Mary coming before Your feet, once again in a deeper way to come to know Your love. We pray for the working of the Holy Spirit, once again setting our hearts to love You. Lord may we see no one, but the Lord yourself. We pray in Jesus name, Amen.

The Church in Ephesus

We thank our brother for the hymns just now. The hymns that were chosen by our brother were very appropriate. Our brother has given us a straightforward introduction – I will be sharing on the book of Revelation concerning the message to the church in Ephesus.

This letter to the church in Ephesus in Revelation has some important background information. The first point is how the church came about and how they came to believe in the Lord Jesus. Secondly, we have the letter that the Lord wrote through Paul to the Ephesians. This is important because if we know how the church began, then we also know the desire and the heart of the Lord in that church that they may know the purpose of their salvation in a deeper way. Third, we have the revelation that the apostle John received, and wrote in the book of Revelation around AD 95 when John was around 90 years old.

When Paul wrote the letter of Ephesians, it was the first time that Paul was imprisoned in Rome, around AD 63. The timing is very important – when the letter of Ephesians was written it was around AD 63-65, and we know that Paul was martyred around AD67. When Paul wrote 2nd Timothy he knew that the time was near for his departure. He said that “he had run the race, he had fought the battle, and he had kept the faith”. It was roughly about 4 years after Paul had written the letter to the Ephesians that he wrote 2nd Timothy here. We know that the church in Ephesus is in Asia Minor and there are seven churches there. But more than that, when Paul wrote the letter of 2nd Timothy a few years after the letter to the Ephesians, he mentioned that many had left him in Asia.

Until the letter to the church in Ephesus, which John wrote around AD95, if you calculate the period of time between writing the book of Ephesians and the letter in Revelation, it spans about 30-32 years. Therefore in these 30 years there were many changes. We know that our churches started over 30 years ago. And the church in Ephesus had a very good beginning, but in a period of 30 years and even at the time of Paul writing 2nd Timothy, there was already much declension in the church in Ephesus.

Today I would like to share about the beginning of the church in Ephesus, which is recorded in Acts Chapter 19-20, and then how the situation in the church was at the time of Paul writing the letter of Ephesians. After that point, there is a spiritual declension, and therefore in the letter to the church in Ephesus in Revelation, the Lord rebuked them on one thing: that they have forsaken their first love.

The main point found in Ephesians is their love, which became their foundation. I will share with you what it is regarding this first love, how the calling of the Lord is to ask us to repent, and the Lord's promise to the overcomers.

The beginning of the Church in Ephesus

Let us begin by turning to the book of Acts 19. Here is the account of the beginning of the church in Ephesus. We read from verse 13-18.

But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches." Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. And the evil spirit answered and said to them, "I recognise Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. This became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified. Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices.

Through the account here, we can see a very important matter because Ephesus was filled with the dominion and the power of the Devil. Here you find that there were many references to demons, and many were involved in sorcery. Ephesus was filled with evil and the work of the enemy – Satan. To cast out the evil forces cannot be done with simple words alone. Some here thought that they would be able to drive out demons with some words. They thought that they would be able to cast out demons by invoking the name of the Lord Jesus or the name of Paul, but the evil spirit answered them "Jesus I know, and I know Paul, but who are you?"

You cannot play games with the devil. If you just use simple words without substance you will not be able to drive the devil out. Therefore, it is not because of the name, but rather whether you have the spiritual reality. And because they did not have the reality, it was useless, and the man who was possessed by the demon jumped on them, overpowered them, and gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.

After that event the Jews and the Greeks living in Ephesus were in fear, and the name of the Lord was held in high honour. Verse 18 says that many of those who believed came and openly confessed their evil deeds.

We see in verse 19 (*And many of those who practised magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver*) that those who believed in the Lord Jesus, they put together the scrolls from sorcery and burnt them in public and the total of the value of the scrolls came to 50,000 drachmas. These drachmas here are the same drachmas that Judas used to betray the Lord – we know that he betrayed the Lord for 30 silver coins – and this is the same coin here. But those who believed in the Lord gathered all of these sorcery scrolls, burnt them, and the value was 50,000 drachmas.

Some will tell you that a drachma is about a day's wage, but once the dominion of Satan had been cast out they were willing to bring together so many scrolls which were worth 50,000 drachmas – how many multiples of 30 pieces of silver is that! And if we have to calculate how many years of wages is that? Assuming they work every day of the week, it's 138 years. I'm already over 60, and I cannot imagine working for that period of time.

When we see the amount of money here, it shows how much they had the love of the Lord to start with because they were willing to give up that much amount of money for the Lord. And in this way (verse 20 – *So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing*) we see that the work of the Lord progressed.

In verse 26 (*You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all*) it shows that people thought that Paul had persuaded many people across Asia. Ephesus was only the starting point, and because of the work in Ephesus the other 6 churches in Asia started up too. The work in Ephesus was like a spark of fire, and because of that the other churches in Asia began.

Keeping watch

We know that in Acts Chapter 20, because Paul was not able to go to Ephesus, he asked the elders of the church of Ephesus to come and meet him in a place called Miletus. This is a place of very beautiful natural scenery. Indeed it was a very good scene, because when they could see the brothers and sisters there, this makes it even more a very good scenery.

Acts Chapter 20: 27-28.

For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Paul told them to be on their guard. They had been bought with the blood of Jesus, and after Paul had left them he warned there would be savage wolves that would come and lead the disciples away with distortions of truth – those who lead people astray would come among them. This should really be a strong reminder for us.

Do you know why there was a declension in the Church in Ephesus? What is the reason why there was this declension? What is the reason why they left their first love? There was a reason for it – it was because many works of the enemy begins from within.

Paul knew that it would happen, and Paul asked the elders there to keep watch. Therefore, the Lord gave the church in Ephesus a very special letter, which is the epistle to the Ephesians. I feel personally that there is a specific reason why the Lord didn't give the content of the letter to the Ephesians to the church in Corinth, or in Galatia, but he gave it to the Ephesians and the letter of Colossians (those 2 letters were written about the same time, and they complement each other). I feel there are reasons why the message of the Ephesians couldn't be given to the churches in Corinth or Galatia by the Lord. Of course the letters are for all the churches. But the Lord has also given a letter to the church in Corinth and the Lord has given a letter to the church in Galatia. You don't need to go into the details but if you know the background to those churches, you would know why.

The first love

We turn to Ephesians 1:15. *“For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints”*. When Paul heard about their condition, he asked that they would remain in their faith and their love for the Lord.

When I read again the epistles in the New Testament I find that faith and love always come together. In particular, the letter to the Galatians mentions that faith works through love; if you only have faith it is not enough, you need to have love as well. This love is not a human love; this love is a godly love. Only after you have believed in the Lord Jesus, then you will have this love of God in you.

The pursuit of the Ephesians is in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in loving all of the saints. When you read Ephesians, maybe you cannot clearly see the condition of the church at that time, but through the words of Paul you understand the desire of the Lord for the Church in Ephesus. The Lord desires that not only will they have a good start, but that they will continue to understand the purpose of the Lord for them. The Lord knows that in the future there will be decay in that place – the Lord knows. Although the Lord knows what will happen, the Lord continues to write these letters to them to show them the way that they should go.

When we read Ephesians you will see 14 references to love. But when we come to the letter of Revelation, you find that they have forsaken their first love. What is the relationship between this love and their first love? Love comes from God; their first love comes as a response to the love of God. And this first love causes us to grow in our love. In Ephesians it says that they may come to know this might, breadth, length, depth and height of this love of Christ.

It tells us of this great love of God in Ephesians 2:4, “*God who is rich in mercy – His great love*”. Again it emphasises that this salvation is based on His great love for us. And we know that this love is one of a relationship, and we mentioned this previously. Let us look at love. Love in the letter of Ephesians is very important. If you do not grasp this love, then I am afraid that you may also have lost your first love.

The outstanding point of this love in the book of the Ephesians, the focus and the illustration there points us to the relationship of a husband and a wife. The husband and wife come together as one, and we find this in Ephesians 5:25: Christ loves the church and gave Himself up for her. The Lord loves His Church, and He gave Himself up for her. But He did not stop at that. It is a start that He saved us, but He has a purpose. Verse 26 – 27 says it is to make her holy, cleansing her.

The marriage of Christ and the Church

In Revelation towards the end, Revelation 19:7-8, it talks about a wedding banquet of the Lamb and His bride.

Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

In Ephesians it tells us that Christ loves the Church and wanted the Church to be His bride. Recently there have been weddings here in East London, and I attended the wedding last Saturday of a brother and sister here. Before they were married they knew that the Lord put them together and that they would be husband and wife. I heard their testimony and sharing, and how they had much planning to be done. In fact there are many preparations that are needed – many preparations. They had to prepare months ahead. What for? For that one day, on that day when they come together as husband and wife.

Therefore in Ephesians it talks about the love between Christ and His bride, and it points towards that one day when we have that wedding feast in heaven. Today, we are in a preparation phase. It tells us that the Lord is preparing for that day by cleansing the Church so that she will not have any wrinkles or blemish. When you come to the letter to Ephesus in Revelation, there we discover this big problem – where has the first love gone?

I have been married for many years, I won't say how long – I'm afraid I will get it wrong! We all remember previously before we got married, when we were still courting our fiancée, we know what kind of relationship that was. They would be the only person who was in our mind, and you

can be on the phone for hours with that person. If she asked you to die for her, you'd die for her, you'd be willing to do that. Do you understand how important this love is? The Lord finds that first love very precious. You see that there will be a wedding and banquet when the bride and the church will become one. Therefore the question is: where is that first love now?

When we attended that wedding, the bride or groom did not ask "do you still love me?" Of course they do. The master of the ceremony will not ask that either. If you have to ask that question, then maybe it is not necessary to have that wedding.

Because of this first love, forsaking all, we love the Lord and how He loved us by giving Himself to us. One day there will be a wedding banquet. When we attend that banquet, we are like that bride or that bridegroom that has so much longing for that day to come. But is the wedding day the most important? Do we think that is the goal?

No, the wedding day is only the beginning. The wedding is only the start. In Revelation you find that the Lord is talking about the love and the relationship after that wedding – there is more to come. But this relationship, this life with the Lord, is based on love. Without this love, then this marriage would have no taste. After you are married, without this love, then why bother living together without love. Therefore, in the church in Ephesus, we can see the point about the wedding banquet.

We will read Ephesians 6:24. "*Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love*". This verse talks about undying love – an incorruptible love which cannot decay. The Lord wants us to see this in the church, to see this undying and incorruptible love where there cannot be any decay. This is very meaningful at the end of the letter to the Ephesians, because not long after this letter was written we start to see decay in this place.

Paul says, if you have such an undying love for the Lord, then you will not be found in corruptible things, but you will be found in perfection, having received grace from the Lord Himself.

The letter to the Church in Ephesus

And now let us have a look at this first love – Revelation 2:1-7.

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 perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate 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 name's sake and have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and 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.

When the Lord asked John to give these letters to the churches, it mentions the messengers of the churches. When we read the epistles, they are all normally written to the saints of the churches there, but here you find these letters are addressed to the messenger – it did not tell us who that person is. We know that the person who holds the seven stars in his right hand, and walks among the lampstands – that is the Lord himself. We know from the background and the situation at that time, that the church there was in much declension. Therefore if you were to give the letter here to

the Christians who were in declension, and who had backslidden, it would be rather meaningless. Of course, they would know something, but the Lord would rather give the letter to the messengers of the church – those who are faithful before the Lord.

We find that the lampstands are with the Lord, and He holds the seven stars. It is the Lord Himself who is walking among them. The seven stars refer to the seven churches, the seven lampstands also talks about the 7 churches. In the Old Testament you also find the lampstand is in the Tabernacle, in the Holy Place. Why is it in the middle? Because it is in between the Holy of Holies and the outer court. In the outer court, they offer the sacrifices there. We know that God asked Aaron to trim the lampstand, to make sure that there is oil and that it is burning bright. We also read of these lampstands in Zechariah, and we know that it is oil from the olive trees feeding these lampstands. On one hand the lampstands gives testimony towards the Holy of Holies, but to those standing outside they can see these lampstands as the testimonies shining towards them. Therefore the testimony has two parts: one is towards God manifesting the full glory of God, and the other is towards the world.

Therefore you need to understand what this first love is; otherwise when you read in Revelation about the deeds, the works, you would find them rather good. However, you have to understand that this is a relationship between a husband and a wife, and in waiting for that wedding day, if they do not have their first love; it is painful to be in that relationship. The wedding is only the beginning. The wedding brings forward the fulfilment and the purpose of the will of God.

Here we also read that they hate the practices of the Nicolaitans. The word Nicolaitans has the meaning that they are very strong, they try to overcome you. But the Lord also hates them. And in verse 15 you find that the church in Pergamum already submitted to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

Today we ask the Lord to recover this first love because this lampstand as depicted in Zechariah is supplied with oil from this olive tree. This oil talks about the Holy Spirit that we read about in Romans 5, this Holy Spirit pours into our heart, and it refers to the pouring into us.

Lastly we read that in Revelation the Lord asks them to repent. Where they have fallen, there they need to repent. What is the meaning of repenting? It means that we have fallen short in some areas before the Lord, and we need to go back to the Lord. In Revelation it tells us how the saints have overcome through the precious blood of the Lamb and the testimony of the word.

Just like the beginning of the letter of the Ephesians, the words that they proclaimed had power – it was not just simple words. In the last days, there is the appearance of godliness, but it lacks substance. We need to repent at that point, so that by the blood of the Lord we are cleansed. As it says in 1 John: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will forgive all of our sins”. We have to rely on the precious blood of the Lord, and we need to rely on the blood of the lamb when we repent.

The promise to the Overcomers

Lastly those that overcame did not love their own life. I'd like to share with you the promise of overcoming. In verse 7 it says that “I give the right to eat from the tree of life, in the paradise of God”. Where is the paradise of God? This morning, our brother shared about the Garden of Eden – it is the garden of God. Some would say that at that time it is the paradise of God on earth. At that time God was able to meet with man, and commune with man, and you find everything to be very good.

But where is the paradise of God today? Some thought that maybe it is in the area of Iraq, but you cannot find it anymore, and you cannot even go to that place. We know that in the Garden of Eden there was the tree of life, and also the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, but where is the paradise of God today?

If you think of the word of the Lord Jesus to the criminal next to him, He said that he would be with Him in paradise. Now you know that this paradise is not on earth. When Paul himself mentioned that he was lifted to the third heaven, he mentioned that was the paradise of God. We know that God is preparing His paradise for us, and it is in heaven, and He is doing His preparation today.

When we read of this tree of life, you find in Revelation 2, that the tree of life was planted on both sides of the river. But with this river of life, is there one river or two? You find that there is this one stream and one river, and they circulate around towards the throne. From all angles you see the tree of life there. We know that this tree of life points to our Lord Himself. The tree of life found in Revelation 22 is a mature tree of life that it bears huge fruit. We can eat of its fruit every month. What the Lord has prepared for us is so abundant.

We know that there you have the city where you will find the tree of life and the river of life. It points to that fact that the Church is like that city of God. We give thanks and praise our Lord that the Lord continues to have such wonderful promises to us who have forsaken our first love to him. The Lord Himself says that "I go to prepare a place for you, and once I have prepared a place, I will come and take you with me". What is the meaning there? He will take us home, to the place He has prepared for us – this paradise of God.

Why does He have to take us to His heavenly home, His paradise? Because He loves us, and He wants to be with us for eternity. When I was at the wedding, the groom said that I really love my wife and I want to take her home now. This is the love of the Lord. Let us pray together.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, we thank You that You are the One that never changes; You are the same today, yesterday, forever. We give You thanks that You love us even though we are forever changing.

Indeed we have a first love, but many have forsaken the first love to You. Lord we thank You that Your calling today is that we should recover our first love to You. You yearn for the Church to be made ready as Your bride, to be reunited to You. You desire for us to have this genuine and pure first love for You.

Lord we confess our shortcomings and our failures before You. Indeed we are very much like the church in Ephesus. On the outside there may be many services many hard work being done, many enduring tasks that we have been doing. Year after year, decade after decade, we seem to have maintained our services and our meetings, on the outside it seems that everything is fine and perfect, but inside us there is already decay and we are falling behind. You no longer find in us this first love.

We thank the Lord that You remind us to repent on where we have fallen. That if we have put people, things, matters before you, we ask that the Lord will cast them aside, burn them on the fire, so that once again this simple first love can grow within us again. For this is what you desire more than other things, because if we do not have our first love then other things mean nothing.

So we ask that Lord use the Holy Spirit to do a very deep work in every one of us to recover this first love in each one of us, to recover this first love among your church, whether it is the fellowship here

in East London, whether it is the fellowship in Southampton, or the fellowship in Portsmouth. We pray that Lord when You look at us You will see the first love being manifested.

We ask the Lord to do a very deep work that will be permanent and that will really change us from within. We do not desire the superficial change, just touching the surface, scratching the skin. Lord we ask You to do a deep work in our hearts, change us from within, so that we conform to your likeness, and that we may have a genuine love for You. We ask that we may seek your face, that there is genuine waiting and longing and yearning for Your coming. Continue to speak to us, do not let us go, but capture each one of us because we belong to You.

We are Your body, You are to do Your work until it is finished. May You have all the glory, and praise and honour. May you find a dwelling place within us. We give You thanks and worship, in Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Saturday 19 April 2014 – Morning

Hymns – Jonathan Lam

Good morning brothers and sisters and friends. Welcome to the second, and sadly last, day of the Easter conference. Although the time seems to be quite short, I feel that God has already given a very clear message to His Church. I just pray that the remaining time of the conference will be beneficial and that God will continue to speak to His people and that we don't just listen but that the word of God will have a real and lasting effect on our lives. We will start today with a time of worship. We will sing two hymns and then I will pass the time on to brother Joe to share.

As I read these two hymns this morning I was reminded about the story of Martha and Mary. When Jesus came into their house, Mary was quietly sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening and paying attention to every word He was saying. But Martha was running around doing all the other work. She came to Jesus and said: "Just asks Mary to help me". Jesus replied: "Martha, Martha, why are you so upset and worried about so many other things? There is only one thing and Mary has chosen the better thing."

Over these two days the presence of the Lord has been with us. May we learn how to choose the better thing before the Lord Jesus; to choose the Lord Jesus Himself. Not just to choose Him today, but also when we go back to our homes may we continue to be still before Him and hold on to our Lord Jesus and give Him the supremacy in our lives. (The first hymn was "Be Still for the Presence of the Lord".)

The second hymn is "I cannot breathe enough of Thee". As many of you know, we had two weddings over the last week in the East London church, and it really reminded me of our relationship between us and our Lord Jesus. How do we know that two people are in love? They will take every opportunity to be with each other, and when they see each other's face; their face will have that smile, that happiness, that indescribable happiness on their faces.

In the same way our love for our Lord Jesus should bring us closer to Him. Like it says in verse 2, when we fix our gaze on our Lord Jesus, when we see that beauty of Him, our hearts will be filled with joy and with ecstasy. Because He is like that henna flower, it is full of fragrance and full of beauty.

In verse 3 it describes the relationship between a servant and his master. In those days if you have served your master for seven years, you have the opportunity to leave the master and find another master. But this servant, as he was serving his master, he realised that this master is different. The master is full of love, and is full of care. He knew that he would never find another master like this one. So when those seven years are up, his master asked him, "do you want to go", and he said, "I do not wish to go, because where else can I find a master as good as you?"

Our dear friends and brothers and sisters, our Lord Jesus, the beloved son of God, is that wonderful Saviour, that loving and caring master. He is that intimate and loving friend. May we have the same understanding as the author of the hymn here that we do not want to go free from our Lord Jesus. Because we have tasted and we have seen how good our Lord Jesus is, we do not want to go.

Message – Joseph Moi

Have we known the Lord?

I would like us to be reminded of the hymn “Hast thou heard Him, seen Him, known Him”. It is by the grace of God that we are so gathered in this way. Last time we were together like this was more than five years ago. We do not know when the Lord will give us another opportunity after this one, but we are here to hear the word speaking and the calling of the church. I believe that the Lord has heard the prayer of the saints in different assemblies; he is to speak to us, he is to call us. The Lord continues to speak, the Lord speaks always, and He is the word that became flesh. But as in John Chapter 1, He came to this place, but this place did not know him. The Lord is in His house, yet the people do not know Him, do not recognise His voice. He is calling, but no one responds.

This hymn really touched me again. The series of questions in verse 1: “Has thou heard Him, seen Him, known Him, Is yours a captured heart?” It is a question for us brothers and sisters: “have you heard Him, seen Him, known Him. Is our heart a captured heart?” Are we still free, are we still running around without a master? “As the fairest of thousands own Him, joyful choose the better part.”

There are too many verses; if I go on longer it would take all the time up. But in verse 3 it talks about the first love, there are idols in our lives of us believers, of brothers and sisters. The Lord no longer is the object of our worship – there are other idols that have taken His place. But how can we get rid of that? “Not a sense of right of duty, but the sight of the peerless one”. When the Lord is exalted among us, then there is the answer.

In verse 4, it says how we need that our eyes will be able to see the beauty of the Lord. To feel the heartbeat of the Lord. We are far from that situation. Verse 5 talks of when the sun of our lives comes in, we will switch off the lights and extinguish the wicks. When the summer is here, when the winter is gone, we no longer wear our underclothes. While in verse 6, it is the look that melted Peter.

May the Lord bless us through this hymn, that we not only sing it, but also say it in our hearts.

The letter to the church in Sardis

We will continue to read the word of God from Revelation 3:1-6.

To the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: “I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you. But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

As we are gathered here for two days, we pray and wait for the Lord who brought messages for us who are gathered here. The Lord has put in our hearts a message for the Church, and this last book of Revelation in the Bible will be familiar with all of us. There are seven letters to the churches here. Yesterday, our brother shared with us the letter to the Ephesians; today, we have just read in

Chapter 3 the fifth church – the church of Sardis. This afternoon, brother Nathan will share the last church – Laodicea.

Revealed by the Lord

We didn't have time to cover 7 churches; I could not even find time to cover one of the churches. I hope that what is impressed on me, what the Lord has moved me to share with brothers and sisters, I will be able to bring forth. As our brother shared yesterday, we need the vision; we need to hear specifics from the Lord. It is something that defies logic, not just mere knowledge. If the Lord is to call His church, there are specific messages, very specific personally messages, that we must hear, and we must find out that message. It is not just some general wishy washy ideas, but something the Lord is burdened in His heart to speak to His beloved church.

We are gathered here as His beloved people, and He is to speak to us. It is He who spoke the word that we have just read. Who knows the person who has spoken? I put it to you that unless the Holy Spirit reveals the Lord Jesus, we haven't yet known Him. And if we do not know Him, we cannot hear what he says to us.

This passage is from the book of Revelation – it means that it is being revealed; some secret, a mystery, hidden, now being opened up. Only through the Holy Spirit can these mysteries be opened up to us. Now before we go into the nub of these, a few other verses would be useful. Our brother yesterday shared that Peter realised that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God.

In Matthew 16:16-17, Jesus asked the disciples, who do you think I am?

Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."

To know that Jesus, the Son of Man, is the Son of God is nothing less than a revelation from heaven.

In Galatians 1:15-16, this passage speaks of Paul's experience and his confession.

But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood."

It is by the grace of God that something has happened to Paul. God has separated him from his mother's womb, and has now prepared the revelation of Jesus Christ in him. It is not that someone like Paul is working it out in his own little brain, and then he figured out who Jesus Christ is. No, it is by revelation, by the grace of God, only then he knew something about the greatness of this Lord that he served.

Another passage, Ephesians 1:17 which we mentioned yesterday.

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.

For the true knowledge of Christ, we need the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. Unless we are under the Holy Spirit's wisdom and revelation, we could not know the Lord Jesus. You see the revelation of the spirit of wisdom of revelation, given in the knowledge of Him. We need the knowledge of God. We need the facts about the Lord Jesus of course, but the facts alone are not good enough. We need the revelation; we need God to be doing something in our heart, giving conviction in our heart,

such that our mind and our heart is opened up, and that mystery, that secret, that hidden thing is suddenly opened up in our heart.

Then that knowledge is being transformed into experience. The Lord Jesus is no longer just a title, He is a person; He is real! He is great, He is majesty, and He is glorious. Only by the Holy Spirit can we see this. I could not do that, no one can do that. Oh brothers and sisters, this is exclusively the work of God. We might be sitting here not for two days but for two years, but if it is not by the work of the Holy Spirit we would not know anything about the Lord Jesus.

The Lord said in Matthew that it pleases God to open up the Son to those who are simple, those who rely on Him. And it shuts up to those who think that they are clever, who think that they are alright. No one would know any secret about Christ Jesus until we are visited by the Holy Spirit. How we need to know that, otherwise we would think that by polishing the bible we would know something about Christ. But we will never know anything. May God for forgive us if we think that we could.

A dead church

Coming back to Revelation, the letter that we have read in Chapter 3 is a very heavy letter, a very serious letter, a damning letter. It is not a letter that is filled with commendation and correction, unlike some others. This is a letter starting with a condemnation – direct and to the point: *“You are a dead church”*.

That is a very serious accusation. If someone comes to us and says that we are a dead church, we may not give him a punch, we would restrain our anger, but we would probably ignore them and dismiss them. But this is not anyone who said this. Brothers and sisters, this is the Lord that says this.

I think that the answer to the illness of Sardis is found in the beginning of this book of Revelation. It started with a revelation of the Lord Himself. Unless the Lord Himself is revealed to His people, unless we know who He is, we also would dismiss Him or ignore Him. We will not give Him a punch, because we can't get hold of Him! However, I think that the solution to a dead church is to truly know the One who pronounces the judgement on the church. Therefore I felt it necessary and compelled to share with you the beginning of this book.

I only pray that the Lord of revelation will speak and move around us today. Not through our words or explanation, but the working of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and in our mind to know something about the risen Lord Jesus Christ, who He really is. Then we will find, in His name, and in the description of Himself, all of the solutions to all of our ills – even to a dead church.

To the risen Lord, the one who holds the key of Hades and Hell, the one who was dead and is alive, and lives forever more. No death is a problem for Him; He has tasted death, He knows what death is like. He overcame death; He is to provide life as a solution for all of our death.

But do we know this Lord Jesus? I fear that many of us do not know Him. I fear that I do not know Him enough. His letters to the churches speak primarily to the angel, to the messenger of the church. We must confess that if we do not know the Lord Jesus, what are we doing here? We are wasting time. I fear that we do not know the Lord enough; I fear that we fail him, I fear this, and I fear that.

But when I read Chapter 1 in Revelation, the character and the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ fills my heart with hope and with excitement. I know that the church has hope, and that all of us have hope because our solution to all of our ills are found in the Lord Jesus.

A description of our Lord

I may not be able to finish off all the 6 verses today, but I think the most important thing is to find who is the one who speaks. The book of Revelation starts with *“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants.”* You find that this book is to reveal to make it open and understood who is Jesus Christ. We’ll look at Chapter 1: 5: *“and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood.”*

Firstly, it says that Jesus is a faithful witness. He is honest and He is a witness. He sees everything, and He will be honest and tell you what you are. He does not need to flatter anyone, He would not over inflate you, nor would He undervalue you. He knows, and He is a faithful witness. But He says *“you are dead”*. If He says you are dead, you are dead. If He says you are good, you are good – because He is faithful and honest.

Secondly, He is the first begotten of the dead. He died, and from death He rose again. How could anyone come out from death? He is the first one; He is the one who has risen from the dead. Tomorrow is Easter Sunday. Matthew 28 says the tomb was opened, and it was empty inside because Christ had risen again. It proved beyond doubt that he was the Son of God – He is the perfect man, the perfect Son. He had gone through death for us, and for our sins, and God raised Him from the dead and He was the first one. All of us one day, when we die, we will rise again just like Him. He is the first fruit of the one who is risen from the dead. It speaks of the power of the Lord. If you can overcome death, what is a problem? There is no problem for Him, He is the first begotten of the dead.

Verse 5 carries on to say that He is the prince of the kings of the earth. He is the king of all the earth. You know the Lord Jesus came first time as a servant, and the second time He will come as a judge, as a King. On the cross of Jesus they said he was the King of the Jews, because we as man, as sinful people, have rejected Him as king. But God has recognised Him; He is a perfect man who is fit to be king. So he is a king that has authority, power and the kingdom.

What a wonderful knowledge if we know something about the kingship of Christ. If we are under Him, we are privileged to be in His kingdom. How privileged we are. There are many people who are queuing to come into the UK, to be citizens of the UK. But we are the members of the kingdom of God! Do we not appreciate it more, more and more? Sometimes I feel that we do not realise the privilege that we have being made as the children of God.

Verse 5 also says, *“unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood”*. Here is something which is very warm to us – it speaks of the fact that the Lord loves us. We are very sinful, we are not loving people, and we are a bunch of nasty people. We have short comings in every area, and yet it says here that He loves us, and that He washed us from our sins in His own blood. In His own blood, He washed us. Do you see that gentleness and tenderness? This is how our Lord is, and He also has made us Kings, and priests unto God His father. This is what God has in mind for all of us.

I must move onto verse 8: *“I am the Alpha and the Omega” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”* The Lord says that I am the Alpha and the Omega. This means

that I am A and Z. It means all of the vocabulary, the beginning of expression and the end of expression. Furthermore, He is the beginning and the end. He is the very start and the very last. No one can be before Him, and no one can be after Him. He was, He is, and He is to come. We are all within His control; everything is under His control, because He is the Almighty. Nothing is below Him; there is nothing that He cannot do. Isn't this wonderful?

Now, verse 13: *"And in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash."*

In the midst of the candlesticks, one like the son of man. This Christ, this risen Lord. He is the king of kings. It says here that He is life unto the son of man. This means that He knows you, and He knows me. No one can say that Lord, "you do not know me, I am too much tempted by this and that. I am overcome with this and that." But the Lord Jesus was a man and in all things He was tempted just like you and I. And He had no sin, so that He could be the high priest, so that He could be our help in our time of need. How wonderful to know that the Lord, even in heaven as the risen Lord, is still the son of man.

Verse 14: *"His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire."*

The white hair speaks of purity, it speaks of His wisdom. The Lord is wise, He is wisdom itself, and He is purity. Nothing impure could be found in Him. Then it says that His eyes were as a flame of fire. You think that He is such an old man with long white hair. Not at all, it's not like that. His eyes are like a flame of fire, full of energy, piercing, seeing, burning, destroying, purifying – this is from His eyes. He sees everything; in Him there is no secret because His eyes were the flame of fire.

Verse 15: *"His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made of glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters."*

The feet of bronze speaks of the movement of God with power. There are judgements, and this speaks of a furnace. The Lord searches things, He is moving things, and He has power and might and movement. His voice as a sound of many waters shows that the Lord continues to speak loud and clear. He is not silent, he speaks.

Verse 16: *"In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength."*

In His right hand there are seven stars, they are in the hand of power. Not one star, but seven stars. That speaks of his might. He is in control, He has full power. The sharp 2 edged sword speaks of words with power to defend like a sword, and also an offensive weapon to destroy the enemy with his words. And His countenance is like a sun shining. The Lord's face is like a sun shining in its full strength. And the sun shines and speaks of light, energy, warmth, life – without the sun there is no life, and it speaks of illumination, making the darkness flee away. This is our Lord Jesus.

In verse 17: *"When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last."*

Would we receive him like that? Is that the Lord Jesus that we know, or do you think that this Jesus is nobody? Perhaps you think that Jesus is only something that is locked up in a church building, someone that we will only pull out the Bible from time to time and read a few verses? No, it is not like that.

John says, *"I saw him, and I fell at his feet as dead"*. Is that our reaction? That is very telling of our knowledge of someone. If you are brought in front of the Queen, if you are so privileged to have an audience with the Queen, what would be your attitude? She is only a mortal, she is only human. How about the Lord here? This is the risen Lord from the dead, king of Kings, and all of these descriptions. If we have seen him, would we fall at his feet as dead?

We read the Lord laid his right hand on John and said to *"fear not"*. I feel that we have no fear of the Lord. Here John's natural and rightful reaction is to fear God. If we know something revealed by God about the Lord Jesus and His majesty, and His greatness, we will fear Him and we will fall down. Do we do that?

May God have mercy on His children. We have no fear of Him. What can we do? We can do nothing. We can only plead for His mercy that He may visit us, and reveal Himself to us. Unless we know the Lord Jesus, we will continue to live our careless life. He said *"then He that liveth, and I was dead, and behold I am living alive forever more"*.

Brothers and sisters, this is a very brief summary of the description of the Lord. Even though we shall see the ill in Sardis, we know that it will be fully met by the Lord himself, because the Lord is all they need and more.

Coming back to the letter, there the Lord said to the messenger to the church that it was a message from He who has the seven Spirits of God. This speaks of the Spirit of God that dwells fully in the Lord. The Holy Spirit speaks of His power of God; the spirit of God also speaks of the generating spirit. We are born in the spirit so that we will have life. Not one spirit, but seven spirits, a complete provision. All the deadness, all the needs for one church, seven churches, or seven million churches will all be met by Christ.

He is also the one who has the seven stars. The stars speak of the messengers, and the messengers are in his hand. They are all under His control. He is our master, may He ever be our master.

Then He says, *"I know you works, that you have a name that you are living, but you are dead"*.

Now this is a key point. This church in Sardis at the time had a name that they were alive – they had a very good reputation, and people outside would see that they are functioning very well. They probably have many people, many meetings, and many different layers of services; outwardly you think that it is very prosperous, and everything seems to be in good order. But yet the Lord says that even though others think that you are alive, even though you have a name that you are living, and a reputation or a brand that people associate with something good, maybe the churches in Ephesus or in Smyrna are close and see that Sardis is a very "good" church, yet Jesus says *"I know your works"*. Outwardly it seems good, there is a good reputation, a good image, a good impression, and people think very highly of you, but the Lord says that you are dead.

Now that is very serious. It is too serious to stop there.

But if the brothers and sisters are dead there in Sardis why did the Lord bother to write? As our brother shared yesterday, humanly speaking we would say, *"Forget them, we will start again"*. But God is not like that. God loves us with an everlasting love; He loves us with His first love; He loves us before the foundation of the world. He knew that we are like that, and yet He still loves us – that is true love.

In Ephesians 2:7 it says that it is the manifest, the grace of God, in generations in centuries, the mercy of God.

What is the mercy of God? If we are all good material, if we are all obedient, then it is difficult to show the mercy of God upon sinners. If that is the case, then there will be no sinners. Yet God, upon us sinners, when we rebel against Him, when we reject Him, when we deny Him, when we lock Him outside the door, He is still knocking there. He still says, "I love you and will not leave you. I will continue to work in you even though you are dead, I still love you".

That reminds me of an incident in my own home. When my brother was very young, we lived in Hong Kong. We were very poor, and he was ill when he was probably only a few months old. He was ill and he deteriorated very quickly. By the time my mother took him to Yuen Long hospital it was already too late. He was already stiffened according to what I was told by my own mother.

The doctor and the nurses said to her, "Put this little baby down, he is dead, he is practically dead". But my mother said, "I cannot put him down, he is not dead yet, can you do something for him?" They said, "No, why do you come so late?" It was because my family had to come from the village in the middle of the night. The doctors would not treat him, and they said that nothing can be done.

So my mother said, "Can you give me somewhere to sit down so that we can pray for him?" Miraculously a few hours later, something came from my baby brother's mouth, and his face became red and warm again. The mother could not let go of the baby because she loved him. Others will say, let him go, they put her next to the mortuary, but there was life coming out again.

God will not let us go because we belong to Him. He loves us and will not let us go, and thereby is our hope. We thank God, that he is a God who sets His eye on us, and forever we are our treasure to Him. Do you know this love of the Lord? Do you know something about this love? Even when you are not good, He wants to love you. You should not have left His love; He loves you, and that is our Lord's love.

We thank and praise our Lord that He speaks to us even when we are so grossly failed Him. Even though we seemingly have no hope, He has a way and He can turn us back.

Dead – not alive

Very briefly I'd like to share a little bit about what it means by deadness. Simply put, there is no life in us. The Lord's life is not there.

We could have many activities, many works, and many religious activities. You could come on Sunday, all dressed up, all together on time. The first thing we do is the Lord's Table, and we see the table there, and people coming and sitting around. What does it mean by deadness in the Lord's Table? That means there is no feeling, no love for the Lord. We are there only as a form, but there is no substance. There is no worship for the Lord, no thanksgiving from our heart. We sing many hymns, these come from our lips, but not from our heart. There is no feeling, no thanking for the Lord. That is deadness.

The Lord does not enjoy that meeting. How often we have such sin within. Outwardly everyone doing the right thing, the bread and the wine are there, yet the Lord isn't there because he is not preeminent in our heart.

How about our hymn singing, our worship? It's a grand word; we call it "worship". May God help us. In many of the hymns that we sing, we pay attention to the melody, and pay attention to what would benefit me, and our feelings. But the Lord says to those who truly worship me, worship me in spirit and in truth.

I do not want to minimise the value of all the new hymns, but let's look at some of the older ones. We compare the content and the value with some of the modern choruses. Where is the true worship? The Lord isn't there to be the centre of our worship. There are some places where the worship is not singing together, there is a soloist. There is a band there, and they are up there upstaging the rest. I'm not here to criticise fellow believers, but if we are talking about deadness we need to look at all of these areas. Where is our true worship?

Every week we have preaching here in the church. According to the scripture we preach, we have precision in the scripture, we have doctrine in the Scripture, we have breath of the Scripture, correctness and accuracy in the interpretation, and yet it lacks the power of the word of God. There is a certain deadness in the orthodoxy. It's something very orthodox, very conservative; there is a lack of life, a lack of power without conviction. People are not moved, people have not changed. What is the preaching for? Deadness. May God deliver us, especially we who stand week in, week out, to serve. May God have mercy on us.

Our bible studies: there are many bible studies going from the beginning of the bible all the way to the end. What kind of bible study do we have? Is Christ the one we seen in the study? Do we see the sweetness of the Lord? Do we see His majesty and worship Him? Or is it only an exchange of information? Sometimes we may even have an argument among ourselves – one group against another: "I'm right, you're wrong". May god have mercy on us; there is no life in such studies.

Our prayers: our brother says prayer is more important than preaching. What kind of prayer do we have? How many people go to prayer? What kind of prayer do we have? I hear regularly, "God forgive us, our prayer is very boring, our prayer sends people to sleep". What kind of prayer is that? There are lots of words, and then an hour or 90 minutes is gone. There are many words, but there is no prayer, no fellowship with God, no union with heaven. The prayer ends at the ceiling and comes down. So the prayer is our platform to criticise, the platform to communicate information – there is no real prayer. Deadness.

How about our offerings? In our church we have many thousands in our account. Monthly we have an arrangement where we are learning to give willingly. There are many pounds and dollars, but there is no value in the sight of God. Why do I say that? Remember the Lord Jesus in his last days: in the temple there was a poor widow who gave two mites and the Lord Jesus said, "Look at this, the worshiper of God, coming to the house of God, not empty handed, to give all that she has to God". One mite the Lord appreciates, and the Lord says this is far more than all the rich people who are emptying their gold into the treasury. I fear that we give much, and yet it's very little because we have not offered ourselves first. That is how God accepts our gifts.

Gospel work – every month we have gospel meetings. We cook for them and sit together with them. Every Saturday before the gospel meeting we go out to Ilford, Barking, and Gants Hill for the distribution of the gospel tracks. Every summer we have a summer bible school, and every Christmas we give calendars to our neighbours. I know your work, you are dead. Why? Because there is no love for the Lord; there is no compassion for the lost souls. Evangelism becomes a work, a way of life for us. It is a routine. There is no feeling, no feelings for those lost souls, and no feelings for those who come to our meetings.

Our brother shares time and again, and we spend so much time getting people in, and for those who are already in, we don't take care of them, and they leave. Why do they leave? Because we have no love and no compassion, no mercy for them. We might ask, "Where are you from? Oh that district is not very good, not going to sit too close to you, in case you need any help from me, in case I may contract anything from you!" Where is the compassion of Christ? If there is none, then there is no love.

I do not want to embarrass ourselves, but the Lord is serious. He didn't say this lightly, but He said it so that we would wake up from our foibles. He not only condemned but He gave council and warning. We thank Him for that.

Remember and repent

In Revelation 3:3, he says, remember, remind yourself and remember. *"So remember how you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent."* We sometimes think that we are alright. Everything is organised, everything is scriptural, and everything looks fine. But we do not remember. The Lord said here, remember how you have received. If you read some English Bible translations, they may use the wrong translation – it is not "what" but "how".

You have to recall, remember, how you received and you heard. Remember the time when you received the Lord with such simplicity and such honesty, so simple and thankful, with joy. That is an expression of life. We need to sit down, brothers and sisters, and find time to remember, trace back to how you come to know the Lord, and how you came to receive, and hold fast, hang on to that simple faith, that first love of the Lord. If there is anything that is contrary to the Lord, repent. We need to repent.

We thank the Lord for the opportunity that we can still repent before Him. Repentance out of a sincere heart, a contrite heart, will be accepted as a pure sacrifice. Otherwise, (verse 3) *"if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you."* The Lord will come back, that is for sure. That is for all us; we will end our natural lives sooner or later, and sooner or later we will meet the Lord. That meeting of the Lord is certain. How is that meeting to take place? The Lord warns us very seriously here. If you do not return, if you do not watch, I come to you as a thief.

Coming as a thief – I hope that not many of you have been burgled before – that is a terrible experience. I wish none of you will have experienced that. Just imagine, you go home, open the door and you find that there was a burglary. What kind of feeling do you have? Or perhaps when you are in the middle of the night and someone breaks in, comes in as a thief, and you confront that person, that burglar – that is a time of terror – astonishment, fright, fear. That is the feeling that is preserved for those who do not repent. Brothers and sisters, be spared that occasion. In the same way that you would not like to be burgled, as you would not like to meet the thief in the middle of the night, we must ever more be prepared to meet the Lord.

He is not like a thief who comes at midnight, unexpected, without warning, but He is our bridegroom who is waiting with anticipation, with sweetness of desires. We prepare ourselves for his coming. It's not that He does not want to come, but we have been at fault – we have not prepared. May God help us, that we may welcome Him as the bridegroom. He is coming as the Son of righteousness, He comes and will drive away all fear and darkness.

The overcomers

Lastly, verse 4 reminds us that the Lord will not forget the few that have not defiled themselves. The Lord commends those individuals. As a church they have failed, yet in the midst of the failed church, in the midst of the dead church, there are a few who are worthy. The Lord has not overlooked them, the Lord knew that they overcame, and they will be rewarded in that day. They will be recognised, not only among brothers and sisters, but their names “*will be confessed before my Father and His angels. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches*”.

He that has an ear, let him hear

This is a very interesting description here. It started with calling the angel, the leader of the church, but then it ends with the calling for everyone. “Let him, who has an ear”, even just one ear, then let him hear what the Spirit, not what man says, but what the Spirit says to the churches. The Lord speaks to the leaders, the Lord also speaks to the Church as a corporate body, and the Lord also speaks to individual members.

You cannot say, the church has failed, I am doomed, I can do nothing! No, the Lord is calling you. You are the ones who has an ear, let you hear what the Spirit is saying.

We thank the Lord for this time together, may He continue to be gracious to us. May he continue to speak deeply in our soul, so that something may change. The repentance means change of our ways, not superficial change, but deep and rutted changed from our spirit, echoing from the heart of God, that our spirit may be facing unto the risen Lord, and that we may realise that He is worthy of our following. Let us pray.

Dear Lord, we can only give thanks to Yourself. Lord can You continue to speak to the dead church. We thank You that even though we do not want to hear, You still would not stop speaking to us. We can only be amazed at Your great love. We can only pray that the Holy Spirit opens our spiritual eyes.

Lord, have mercy on us so that we understand and appreciate. Even though You rebuked us, Lord You point out many things that we wouldn't want to hear because You love us, we know that You love us, even more than a mother loves the sick child. Lord, help us to appreciate and understand this love. We pray that the Holy Spirit will be specific and direct to speak to each of us. Have mercy that we will not listen for others or for the church, but that we will hear ourselves because the Holy Spirit says that those who have ears, let him hear.

Lord, each and every one of us are touched by Your grace in this meeting, that before You Lord we could be renewed and have a deeper appreciation and knowing of You, and a deeper pursuit. Lord, have mercy upon us because You know us by name. We know that it is by your love that we are brought here, so we pray that Your love will constrain the Holy Spirit to do works that cannot be done by man.

We say again Lord, it is not by mere man's words, that we can do anything. We pray for the Holy Spirit to speak. In Jesus Christ's name, Amen.

Saturday 19 April 2014 – Afternoon

Hymns – Alex Pun

Good afternoon brothers and sisters and friends. I hope you have been fed well! I am happy to be able to have this time of worship in the Lord. I hope we will still be alert in the afternoon and not fall asleep. How we need to open our mouths and praise the Lord because He is worth of all praise. He loves us and gave Himself for us. We need to open our mouths to praise him because God is willing for man to open his mouth to praise Him.

Let us pray together in the Lord.

Lord, we thank and praise You. We thank You for Your cross. We thank You for Your salvation. We thank You that in Your resurrection we have our hope. We do not know how to repay you. We know we want to come with a thankful heart and praise You, with a spirit to praise and worship You.

We long for Your presence and at this moment for You to be in our midst, and that You may move freely and speak to us. Open our eyes and our hearts that we may all come to see You. We long for Your presence and Your words. We ask that You renew each of us that we may please You.

Lord, we that are so unsuitable, we look to You to use us. For each of us, we commit ourselves to You and come before You to serve You. We pray in the name of the Lord Jesus, Amen.

The next hymn is (...). We thank God for His love towards us. After we have received this love, has our lives changed? Do we have a joyful life? This will be the difficulty that we have. Each time we face difficulties we can still have joy to the Lord and see His love for us. Nothing in this world can separate us from His love. Just like the next hymn, I hope that this can be our encouragement and our response to the Lord. Even though we have to face this world, we will not lose our joy and our faith towards the Lord. The most important thing is that we do not lose the first love we had for the Lord, because the Lord truly loves all of us. This is true and I hope you can tell the person next to you that the Lord Jesus truly loves you.

I hope the next hymn will help us, this is a new hymn and is sung in Mandarin but let us consider the words as we sing.

Hallelujah, praise the Lord. We will hand the time to Nathan.

Message – Nathan Kan

Good afternoon brothers and sisters. We thank God for the opportunity to have this time of sharing with brothers and sisters.

When brothers and sisters were sharing about having this meeting, I thank the Lord that God was able to move us. I truly feel that the Lord's coming is very near, but how much are we really prepared for his coming?

When the brothers were preparing and sharing together about the conference, in me I felt that the church needs to look at what is God's heart and mind in these last days. This morning brother Joseph has already mentioned that this afternoon I will be sharing about the church of Laodicea. And yesterday Sanny already mentioned that when God came to save us, He does not merely want

to save us as individuals, but He has a much greater plan. For Him, He wants to build His Church. This is very much in the heart of God.

When David was sharing with us, brother shared around the relationship that the Church should have with the Lord – this love, this intimate relationship. If the church were to lose this very first love, you can do a great deal, but then it will not in any way satisfy God's own heart. Outwardly you may have a great day of activities – just as our brother shared this morning – you can be very zealous preaching the gospel, every Sunday you may come and be able to provide to the needs of brothers and sisters; however, if you have lost our very first love to the Lord, then the Lord will not be able to be satisfied.

This morning as our brother was sharing on the church of Sardis, it's such a pity that although in name they are very much alive, in reality it was a church without any life. However, in their midst the Lord was still able to find those that He could actually praise, because there it said: *"that Thou has a few names that has not defiled their garments."*

The church of Laodicea

Now when we come to the church of Laodicea, we will see what the Lord has to say about the church in Laodicea. I have prepared a map, and we can see that the church in Laodicea is in the East. The island of Patmos, where the apostle John wrote the letters to the seven churches from, we can see in south west corner of the map.

The very last letter was to the church of Laodicea. As we come to read of this church, it's not only in Revelation that we come to hear about Laodicea. Let's turn to Colossians 4:12-13.

Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always labouring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. For I testify for him that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

So not only is Laodicea mentioned in Revelation, but is mentioned here in the letter which was written to the church in Colossae too. If you look at the map you will see that I have highlighted two yellow spots. These two yellow spots were not referred to in the 7 churches (Hierapolis and Colossae). The bottom yellow spot, Colossae, is where the letter written to the Colossians, and just now we were reading in the letter that Hierapolis was also mentioned. We see that these three places were very nearby to one another.

We believe that Paul had never been to this church of Laodicea. But who is it who had helped to build this church? It's very possible that it was by the name mentioned in the book of Colossians – Epaphras. And for this church in Laodicea, if we continue to read on into verse 14 of Colossians chapter 4 we see it says, *"Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greets, and also Demas"*.

It could have been possible that the church in Laodicea might have been a home group church; it could have been a meeting in the house of this brother. The meeting may not have been a very big meeting; however, in the heart of Paul, he was mindful of this group of brother and sisters.

Why do I say this? Because in verse 16 Paul went on to say *"When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part, read my letter that is coming from Laodicea."*

We find that Paul not only wrote to the church in Colossae; he also wrote a letter to the church in Laodicea. However, this letter is not included in the New Testament. We do not know the leading of the Holy Spirit and how it had been, and we have no chance to read of this letter. However, there is one thing that we can see from this, it was a church was being cared for. In the heart of Paul, we have seen how he would also write letters to the church in Laodicea.

This book of Colossian that Paul had written to the Colossae church was not only for them who are there to read, but also for those in Laodicea to read the letter. We can see that how there was help and provision spiritually, and how God had not in any way neglected the church in Laodicea. God had used his servant, Paul, to tell them of His heart and mind, and of His will.

However, when we come to the book of Revelation, we see through the apostle John the words that were written to them. In our heart we find what a pity. Shall we read this passage together in Revelation 3:14-22.

To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this:

I know your deeds; that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

The outward fame of Laodicea

This place in Laodicea, looking at it from man's point of view, would be a very good place to live. At that time it was a very good city, and they were very famous for several things, but God used these things to rebuke the church in Laodicea.

What were they famous for? Firstly, they had produce of wool which they made into garments. In our mind we think that the wool is white. In the Bible when we talk about sheep we have this impression of how they are white. But what was Laodicea famous for, as far as their wool was concerned? It was black wool. This is what they had made into garments; it wasn't white garments, but rather dark ones.

Secondly, another thing they felt they could be proud of was that a well-known medical centre. What did people go there for? They believed that they had minerals there that would help the eyesight of people who had need of it. So at the time, people this place was very well renowned for the healing of the eyes.

Thirdly, and it's to do with the city itself, it was a place where there was a lot of gold. Several weeks ago I was discussing with Joseph how to get here, and Joseph was saying that you don't need to take the route which goes through Dartford tunnel, just take the A20. Yesterday, when we were driving down the A20 to the conference we came to see Canary Wharf – the financial centre of London.

Similarly, this city of Laodicea is very much like London. At the time it was, obviously, nothing to do with the stock exchange; however, there was a great deal of buying and selling of gold.

Why did they have so much gold? Because many who had retired would go to that city, so a great deal of pension gold is there! It became a very famous financial centre for the buying and selling of gold. And those who had retired really would have loved to be going to Laodicea to make it their home – it's a little bit like Bournemouth or Christchurch! If you go to Bournemouth you'll find many elderly people there, where they can enjoy the sunshine that comes with the south coast.

To give an example of the riches and the abundance within this city, in AD 60 there was an earthquake, and the city was damaged. The Romans were considering whether it was worthwhile to put the money in to rebuild the city. However, the Laodiceans said, "We do not need the help of the Roman emperor because we are the financial centre. We have the resources and means to rebuild the city that the earthquake had damaged."

This is what we know of the city of Laodicea; this is the kind of city that it was. It seems that they had so many wonderful points. But what they thought to be their good aspects, the Lord was using these points to speak to them.

You are neither hot nor cold

What did the Lord say? In verse 15 it says "*I know your works, and you are neither hot nor cold*". This is what the Lord was rebuking the church of Laodicea for. In fact this was also to do with the water supply of this city. In Hierapolis there was the hot springs which would give warmth, and in Colossae there was a very cool and cold water supply which was very refreshing. But when these waters met in the city of Laodicea, it was neither cold nor hot. The very situation that they knew about themselves with their water supply, the Lord was using to speak to the church in Laodicea.

I don't know when you read of what the Lord was saying to the church of Laodicea whether we have noticed that there is something different there to what the Lord had said to the other six churches? If you look back at what the Lord was saying to the six churches beforehand, you'll find that some of these churches appear to be rather bad; yet the Lord was able to see something good in these churches.

For the church of Ephesus the Lord talked about their labours and how they had the endurance and patience. For the church of Smyrna, although they appeared to many to be in poverty, yet the Lord regarded them to be rich. For the church of Pergamum, there were those who had laid hold of his word and had not forsaken them. In the church of Thyatira, in Chapter 2:19 we see, "*I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first.*" For the church in Philadelphia, in Chapter 3:8, it's noted that they kept His word and did not deny His name. Even with the church in Sardis that our brother had shared on this morning, even though this church may be reckoned before God as one dead, yet the Lord was able to find in their midst the minority.

But when we come to the church of Laodicea, we see how the Lord described them as neither hot nor cold. So often we think that neither hot nor cold is not entirely cold and that there is still some warmth. It seems that it is not that bad. However, when the Lord was saying this to them, we find that there was nothing that the Lord could say to praise them. We can see that this church in Laodicea sees themselves is very differently to how the Lord sees them. In verse 17 it says "*because though say I'm rich, I have need of nothing*".

A wretched state

Brothers and sisters, just now I mentioned the background to Laodicea. They were very content and very pleased with themselves. We see this group of brothers and sisters: how they have been affected by the world, how they thought that they had everything, and they have this meeting place where it seemed that they lacked nothing. But here, the Lord has said to them that *“know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked”*.

We see from this group of brothers and sisters in the church of Laodicea, they felt that they had everything, but when the Lord looked at them how different the condition was. How they are wretched, how they were miserable, how they were poor, how they were blind, and naked. This is what the Lord sees of them.

When we see how the church in Laodicea was in such condition, we find that they are described as being wretched. This word only comes about in the New Testament on two occasions. It is here in Revelation, and the other location is in Romans 7:24. *“Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?”*

Here in this passage this word wretched is the second occasion that we read of this word being used in the New Testament. When the Lord sees the condition of the church in Laodicea, outwardly although they appear to have everything; however, the Lord sees them as being wretched. Why are they reckoned to be wretched? They have already believed in the Lord, but yet they were not living in the Lord. When we look at the book of Romans, and when Paul asked how he could be delivered from such a wretched state, it says in verse 25, *“Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”*

Do you see that the situation in Laodicea? Outwardly, they appear to be very rich, but their spiritual condition is such that they were in wretchedness. Brothers and sisters, today in our lives do we find ourselves in such a state? On Sundays we come to the meeting. However, on other days how much do we trust and rely on our Lord? Do we live a life that is only reliant on our own self and means? If we are to just merely rely on ourselves to live our life, then it is easy for us to find ourselves in such a wretched state. Especially in these days, it seems that we are so busy, so often; often to the point that we have forgotten about our Lord. At work, and for our young people in their job prospects, we know that if we are not relying on the Lord, it's easy for us to find ourselves in such a wretched state. Outwardly we may be seen to be very rich, and indeed materially we may have no lack; however, spiritually we are in such a wretched state. And when we are in such a wretched state, do we know that we are in it?

What is it that the Lord says of Laodicea? He says that to be in such a state of not knowing that you are wretched is truly miserable. What is so miserable? It is when you do not know the problem that you are really in; when we think that we are still fine and good, but in the sight of God we actually have no way to fulfil what God requires. So the Lord said this to them – this is indeed truly miserable.

Brothers and sisters, I hope that we are able to encourage one another here to come before the Lord for him to enlighten us.

Poor in the Lord

Thirdly, the Lord mentioned of them being poor. How could the Lord resolve this problem of theirs? The Lord says, *“I advise you to buy gold of me purified by fire”*. They do not know how poor they are. They were saying to themselves that we have become rich and lack nothing; everything is well.

Outwardly, it seems that they have everything, but here the Lord says to them, you must come to buy of me gold purified by fire, that you may truly be rich.

Blind in the Lord

The Lord then went on to say to them that they are blind. Their blindness is nothing to do with their physical eyes. Just now I was saying to brothers and sisters that they were renowned for their medicine that was able to heal sight. This was the thing which they were most proud of. But here the Lord says to them, you are blind, and *“how you need to come and buy eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see”*.

Brother and sisters, we know that what the Lord was referring to wasn't physical blindness, but rather the spiritual blindness. How they have lacked the spiritual insight, and how they have not been filled with the Holy Spirit. Although they may still have their meetings, they may have everything, yet in fact they are in their situation where they have a great lack. When the Lord says to them how they are to buy from him eye salve to anoint their eyes, the Lord is reminding them how they have need of the Holy Spirit to give to them the true insight.

Previously, our brother was sharing about the church in Ephesus in Ephesians 1:17-18.

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

Here we see what exactly the eye salve is. We cannot use our own ability and wisdom to understand the mystery of God. We cannot just rely on just some understanding of the Bible to go and serve the Lord. We really need the leading of the Holy Spirit in us.

So often, as we serve, we look at others to see how they are doing it. Then we think this is how they do it, so we'll do it like that too. However, today, the one who we serve is the Lord Himself. We need to see what it is that the Lord requires us to do, and how we need to follow Him and to serve Him. How are we to know what it is that the Lord wants? We really need the Holy Spirit of the Lord to reveal these things to us.

Brothers and sisters, we may have come from different places today. We have brothers and sisters from East London, Southampton and Portsmouth, and each place that we come has different things that the Lord has entrusted to us. How the Lord has called upon us as a group of people to serve Him? How is it that the Lord would want us to serve Him? If we are not able to see the leading of the Lord, how are we to serve Him? Then we will be like the church in Laodicea. We can just arrange to have a meeting every Sunday, and it will be an orderly one. We sing hymns, we can have different Sunday schools, and it seems that physically we may be well resourced. But what the Lord wants to teach us, and the teaching that He has for us, is that outwardly you may possess much; however, without the Lord Himself then all these would have been in vain.

The Lord calling to His church

Why do I say this? Let us read Revelation 3:20. *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.”*

Brothers and sisters, why is it that the Lord would say these words? He says to the church in Laodicea, *"behold I stand at the door knocking"*. Shouldn't the Lord have been inside? Why is He outside knocking? Here it really shows us the situation of the church in Laodicea.

Today we really need the mercy of the Lord. To start off it may have been that the Lord has moved brothers and sisters to have a meeting, and we see how we are able to be a testimony to Him, and how to serve Him. But then, as time goes on, it seems that this meeting, although it's well prepared for, and each Sunday they would carry on doing the same thing, but slowly it becomes a habit. We no longer have to come to the Lord and ask Him, "How do we need to be today?" We don't ask "Lord will this meeting that we are having, glorify you?"

This morning, as our brother was sharing, when we come round the Lord's Table, are we really there to worship our Lord? Are we really there to remember the very love that the Lord has for us? Or are we just there merely performing some ritual, just because the leading brothers say that we should have such a meeting of the Lord's Table? Or perhaps we see that it was said in Corinthians we need to have such a meeting in remembrance of the Lord, so we just do it? But deep in our hearts, are we there, and can we really experience the presence of the Lord?

Just like the condition of the church of Laodicea, it says *"behold I stand at the door knocking, and if anyone hears my voice and open the door I will come in"*. We thank the Lord that he has not forsaken the church of Laodicea. Even though they had not been a good testimony to the Lord, the Lord wouldn't abandon or forsake them. It is just like when God first created man; God and man had a good communion. However, after man had sinned, just as was shared yesterday, God came to seek after man. There was God was saying to him, "man where are you?"

From that point onward, God has been looking and seeking for man. No matter what condition we are in, yet the Lord is seeking for us. Even the church in Laodicea, having fallen into such a miserable condition, thinking that they have everything, when the Lord sees them as having nothing, still the Lord came to seek for them.

The Lord's answer to the problem in the church of Laodicea

When the Lord introduced who He is in the opening of the letter to the Laodiceans, in fact He was telling them the way for them to solve their problems. What did the Lord say of himself? In Revelation 3:14, *"The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this."*

Brothers and sisters, if we look at these seven churches that are written of in the book of Revelation, the Lord introduces Himself to each church in a different way. The way that He would introduce Himself is to point out the problem which that church was having, and to the church of Laodicea the Lord is pointing out their need.

Firstly, the Lord is saying to them that He is the Amen. I suppose that brothers and sisters know what Amen is, because each time as we finish off our prayer we say Amen – it means "that it is", or to put it another way "it is true and we are saying what is in our heart". Here the Lord says of Himself that He is the Amen that is speaking to them.

In the New Testament this word Amen is used 152 times. And the Lord himself has said this word 80 times. If you were to look these up in the Gospels you would be able to find these 80 Amens. Sometimes, in the Chinese bible it doesn't always translate the word Amen as "Amen", but sometimes says "truly" or "verily I say to you".

So how did the Lord introduce himself to the church in Laodicea? The Lord is saying to them, “Verily, verily, I say to you”. He is saying that I am the one who is true; you need to come to Me, you need to open the door to Me, then you can come away from your miserable and pitiful situation. There is nothing today that could save us. In our midst we may have some friends who have not yet believed, and I would say to you that the Lord indeed is the one who is true; He is indeed the only true God.

Secondly, the Lord was saying to them, He is the faithful and true witness. The Lord is saying to them that what the Lord witnessed is true. What is it that the Lord is bearing witness to? In John 12:49 the Lord tells us what it is he is bearing witness to: *“For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak.”*

Fixing our eyes on the Lord

There the Lord was saying to the church in Laodicea how they are to think back to reflect on their own witness to the Lord. He wants the church to bear testimony to the true God, and as far as Laodicea was concerned it was a church that only had an outward form. They really did not know of the Lord Himself; they did not bear witness to the true God. He is telling “You need to come and know this God who is true, that you may truly be saved, and come to know the only true God”.

It is not only that, but the Lord went on to say that what you need to know even more is not only to come to know of God the Father Himself, but all the more to know the Lord Himself; to know of the Lord is not just in our heart, just as in this morning’s sharing, but that today the Lord wants us to know Him. We need to have this conviction; we need to have this intimate relationship with the Lord, just as our brother was sharing yesterday, to have this relationship of a husband and wife.

Today as we gather together to serve him, as we gather for our meetings, our eyes are no longer just looking at outward things, but our eyes should be fixed on the Lord himself. Today, as far as this church in Laodicea is concerned, there is a lesson for us to learn. We are not looking outwardly at the physical things: it’s not looking at how big our meeting place is, or how many people are attending our meeting. Here the Lord is saying that He is the one who is knocking at the door, and the question is whether the Lord is in our midst. In our service, are we really seeking to please the Lord Himself?

The Lord went on to say to the church in Laodicea, not only had He not forsaken them, He is there still to call and seek for those overcomers: *“He that overcomes to him, I will give to sit by my throne”*. Although it seems that the Lord cannot find anything good about this church, but the Lord had not forsaken them. He is still calling for overcomers. In these last days, He longs to come quickly, and here He is calling for those who are overcomers to know of the Lord’s heart, and to follow after the Lord Himself.

What did the Lord say finally? *“He that has an ear let him hear what the spirit says to the assemblies”*.

Brothers and sisters, today we know that the conference is a very short one. In fact, how rich the words of the Lord really are, and how limited we are that we cannot really speak out what is truly in the heart of the Lord. As brothers have been praying, the Lord really wants to come back quickly, but we have delayed His return. We hope that we will also be those who will respond to the words of the Lord. May we hear even just a word or two from the Lord; may the Holy Spirit of the Lord be

able to empower us because we know that we can't rely on ourselves. There is no way we can do it ourselves; all is from the grace of God, starting from our salvation. As we follow after the Lord, each step is from the grace of the Lord. If the Lord were to withhold His grace, we would not be able to stand here today. We know how the enemy is not willing to let us go, but we thank the Lord, he says that everyone that the Father has given to Him, not one will be lost.

Although in Revelation what we see is that there are many churches with various lacking; however, if we are willing and ready to come back to the Lord, and are willing to lay hold of the Lord Himself, then I believe that the Lord will be able to fulfil the work that he wants to do. May the Lord have mercy on us. We end in prayer.

Lord, for Your own name's sake we pray that You hear our prayer and our cry for Your mercy.

We know that we are not far from those conditions that are written in the book of Revelation. Yet Lord, we believe that what You have in Your heart You have not given up. What You have in mind of fulfilling, You have not abandoned.

Lord, You have declared yourself to be the faithful and true witness; You have borne upon us what this means. We can only look to You and ask for Your mercy for Your own name's sake. As we have been saying, You are not the one who is delaying Your return, but we are the ones who have kept You from coming. We can only say that Thy will be done, even in people who are in no way worthy or able.

Lord we thank You that we know that it is not by ourselves that we can fulfil what You want. How You would want us to be those who know how to come to you and repent before You, that in all our situations that are displeasing before You, that we can be those who still come and repent before You. For this Lord, we know that we need the enlightening of the Holy Spirit. We know that it is pointless for man to try and point this out; man telling us where we have gone wrong is different to You enlightening us.

Lord we have to say again how we pray for You to speak to each and every one of us, and as we commit this before You, we know that You are still the one who is working out Your purposes.

So Lord we look to You with hearts of praise and thanksgiving, even though our heart on the other hand may also feel very different. We commit all of us before You as we come to the end of this conference, because we know that the end of Your work is not done yet. How we have need of Your mercy for Your continual working as we leave this place. We ask all this in the name of the Lord Jesus – Amen.