

Revelation 1, 2 (Conrad Bowman) (9-23-07)

All this scrambling around is because last week, with all the attention we've paid to it, John and I managed to get this little recorder set so it got the first three seconds, and then turned off. Of course, he went to his office to transcribe it Sunday afternoon and it was blank, and he panicked. Mr. Walsh, where are you?

Mr. Walsh? Walsh? Here.

Conrad Bowman. OK. I just would like to know where the incoming is coming from. That sounded like a warning to me. [Laughter].

Mr. Walsh. Is that my reputation?

Conrad Bowman. I'm afraid it is, sir. [Laughter]. I afraid it has; well, it's amazing how fast bad news gets around. [Laughter]. What's that Western song? Bad news travels like a wild fire. Good news travels slow.

We're in the Revelation of John, right at the end of the first chapter and we're going to go into the message to the angel or messenger of the Church in Ephesus this morning.

Donna [Cross], we have positive hope and expectancy of that procedure you have scheduled this week.

Prayer. "Father guide us in our study of this morning, just lead us into the truth of the gospel and the way it continued to unfold right here before your apostle John, and has come straight to us in this age and day. We thank you for it, and commit the time to your keeping, in Christ's name. Amen."

Evelyn raised an interesting point. A lot of people are interested in Revelation today. The Revelation standing alone wouldn't mean a blooming thing if it wasn't for the Pauline Epistles that precede it. Every problem that Paul identified and gave a warning against, and told us to watch out for, right up through 68 A.D., and just before he died – had presented itself by the time John wrote the Revelation. It was barely at the end of the first century, just barely. And the church had already fallen apart. It had just come unglued doctrinally. The Church was guilty of reaching out and just drawing in every one of those things that they had been warned about so repeatedly by the apostle Paul. It makes you wonder, doesn't it; we often think, "Man, that first Church must have been

strong." It was hammered out and forged under persecution and great difficulty. Jerusalem was being destroyed; pulled down around their ears. They surely must have been a strong church; and they heard these things directly from men who had heard them directly from Christ. Well, it wasn't so; it wasn't so. They were as frail and weak as we are today.

Yes sir?

[Bill O'Fiel]. I was going to point out that this is the period of inclusiveness.

Conrad Bowman. Thank you very much, Mr. O'Fiel. What they were doing is reaching out, exactly as Bill pointed out; they were trying to be inclusive of everybody. Paul had told them clearly that the gospel of redemption, as brought by Christ to the NT Church, was going to mark us out as separatists. We're to come apart from the world, because we were saved out of the world. They were to stand apart from religion, because they were surrounded by it, and, they reached out and adopted it. "Tolerance" was the watchword of the day. They were going to tolerate everything, and that's being stuffed down the throats of several generations of our children even today, and we need to be aware of it. **We are not to be a tolerant people.** We're to be an intolerant people where sin is concerned. **We are particularly to be an intolerant people where the gospel is concerned.** And, the message of the Revelation of Christ to the apostle John is exactly that. You watch what He says to these churches, because He says the same thing to every one of them; "I know your works." I know your works, and I'm not happy with them. All these conditions of all these churches are covered, and He says, I know your works, and **except you repent and turn to My work,** I'm going to come visit you. And judgment is going to be in the hand. Work is not the answer. God didn't save you because He needed your production. He didn't and does not need your *work*. **The Lord Jesus Christ, who paid for our redemption, did all the work, and finished it. He didn't leave it unfinished with ragged edges. He did all the work, and finished it, and left it to us to walk in those works.** That's Ephesians 2:10. We're going to come to Ephesus this morning.

Now, that will just give you a little glimpse if you haven't been here as to what we've been into for the last couple of years. And, it's been a good trip. And, it's been an absolutely outstanding trip for me. Just the unfolding of this with such clarity – the message of God to His churches, and the way we should walk, and the way we should live. He sent the apostle Paul to prepare the Church to walk in those works until He comes again. Well, I happen to believe we're the

generation that's going to see the Lord's return. I'm just convinced of it. I feel it in my bones, through the hurts and everything. It doesn't matter. I think the Lord's coming; soon, and, "Come Lord Jesus, I don't have anything I want to finish." You know, I can leave the grass cut, and the figs on the tree, and the things I ought to have picked up off the driveway – sorry Norma [Laughter]. All those unfinished – you've got them, you've got them too! Right? I'm ready to leave them all. Leave them to the next guy.

OK. Let's start in verse 12 of chapter 1.

Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me.  
(Revelation 12:1)

He heard this voice behind him, the apostle did – remember this is an old guy, now. He's well along in years. This is at the end of the first century, he's been exiled on the Island of Patmos – he's out there by himself; he hears a voice behind him, he turns to see the voice that was speaking with him.

And having turned, I saw seven golden lampstands.

There are two words: The light, the lamp, and lampstands, in scripture. One is *luchnia*, and that's what it is talking about here. A *luchnia* is something that's complete in order to give light. It's something to hold it with, an oil reservoir, a wick, it's everything you need to reflect the light. You probably have some of these in your house; old coal oil lamps. Every time a hurricane comes, you fire those babies up. And, it burns a half-dozen houses down in Houston every time hurricane season comes to Texas. [Laughter]. But, that's what it is. That's what it is talking about. It's a complete apparatus.

The other word is *phos*, from which we get phosphorescence and other associated words. And *phos* means the light itself. The *luchnia* provides the foundation and the basis for the *phos*. So, this is talking about seven golden lampstands – *luchnia*.

And in the middle of the seven golden lampstands I saw one like a Son of Man – [One like the Son of Man, who Looks like a man] clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire.

Isn't this a great description. There's a young artist, a young woman who I – gosh, I can't remember her name now. She's done a series of drawings on Revelation. She was teaching a pre-teen Sunday school class in her church and since she was an artist, she painted this picture according to this description. I'll bring it next week. I have a copy of it that she drew exactly like it's described here. The white hair speaks of age and wisdom. You like that? ]Laughter]. That's good. There's the white hair, white like wool, like snow; and eyes that burn like a flame of fire, penetrating, like fire with truth in it. A fire is an instrument of purification, and these are eyes that purify what He sees, and a mighty booming voice that just overwhelms the apostle.

His feet were like burnished bronze ---

And bronze – brass, burnished, discolored, always represents judgment applied to righteousness. That's what brass represents; it is righteousness that's been tested by fire, and proven. So,

His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. In His right hand He held seven stars.

**7** Seven you will find is the number of completion, in everything that it does, and every time it occurs, it's talking about something that's complete; as a plan, or as an operation of some kind.

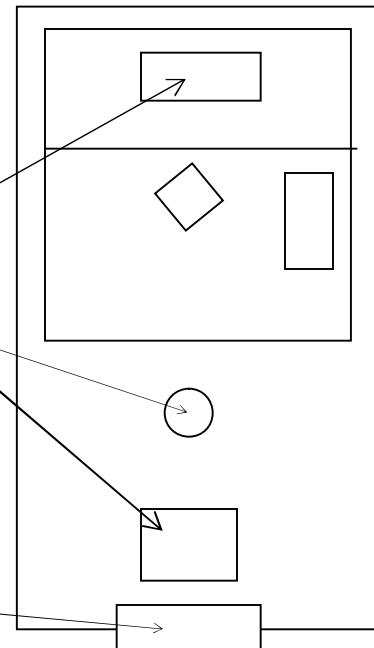
In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword.

The word "sword" is *rhomphaia*. There's another Greek word we get "machete" from. *Rhomphaia* was not the short sword. You've probably heard the sharp two-edged sword spoken of before, and it's always talked about as the Roman weapon of choice for close-hand battle. It's a short, two sharp edged, sword made out of good steel. That was the Roman short-sword. Well, the *rhomphaia* was not that short sword. The *rhomphaia* was more like a spear, or a lance. It had a shaft made of some sort of hardwood, and on the end it had a blade that came to a point. And they would take grinding stone, and they would grind two hollows out in either side of that blade. You know how your best kitchen knives are hollow ground on the edge. And the reason they are hollow ground is so when you are cutting through a piece of meat, it may have bone or something in it. That hollowed out portion cuts down the drag on your knife so it will cut

smoothly, and the hollowed out portion – if it's cut all the way through – you'll actually hollow that thing out and sharpen the edges on it. The word used for two-edged here is a word that comes from *stoma*, it's *distoma*. A *stoma* is a mouth. Here is *stoma*, right here [pointing to the mouth]. So what this says is a sharp *rhomphaia* long instrument with hollowed out places on the blade to do maximum damage. When you pierce something with that thing and twist that shaft, it cuts out a hole about that big around. It was the Roman answer to a Teflon-coated bullet today. You know, the Teflon-coated bullets (Black Talon) they are using now that will pierce body-armor, and they just "boom," come apart when they penetrate. Well, this was the Roman equivalent to it. Now this is crude, and if it disturbs you, I apologize for that. Well, not really, I'm sorry that you're disturbed, but I want you to get the picture. When John turns and looks, he sees this image with a long sword ready to do battle and damage, cause carnage, coming out of His mouth. And, the three words listed are, it's (1) the sword, (2) the two-mouthed, and (3) the sharp. The article "the" is before each one of those words, meaning that they are individually emphasized for the characteristics that they carry into the image. It's saying, you look at this, because this thing coming out of the mouth of one like the Son of Man is an image of an instrument of destruction. There's no mistaking that this is what it is. It's judgment; it's not a threat; it's judgment. This image brings it to them emphatically. So, he turns, he sees this Image, and when I saw Him,

And His face was like the sun shining in its strength. When I saw Him, I fell to His feet like a dead man.

And do you remember when that word occurred before, that phrase? They built the tabernacle in the wilderness. They got it all ready to go, and God tells Moses, get Aaron and all his priests, and line them up right here at the door of the congregation, and here's the door, and behind them is the **Brazen Altar**. And on the other side of the altar is the laver, and right behind that is the tent to which the priest went with the sin offering once a year on the day of atonement to put it on the **Ark of the Covenant** inside the Holy of Holies. All of Israel has pitched their tents around this site of the tabernacle in the wilderness. It wasn't a very big place. And God tells Moses, get Aaron, who is the High Priest, and bring him out, here is the gate, the door. You get all the people and line them



up in front so they can see in through the door. And put Aaron right here, and you stand there with him, and you take the sacrifice that's going to sanctify this place, and you prepare the sacrifice, and put the wood and the sacrifice up here on the **Brazen Altar**. And then you stand there with them before Me. And the minute he did that, fire shot out of inside the tabernacle, through the great veil, through the two rooms of the tabernacle, and hit that sacrifice on the altar in a blaze, like a ball of lightening – ka-boom – and it went up in smoke. And that's how God demonstrated **sanctification** to the children of Israel in their first walk as he delivered them out of bondage. That's how He demonstrated His power to them. And it said that Moses and Aaron and the priests and all the millions of the Israelites that were gathered there **fell down like dead men**. Same phrase. Yes sir.

Jeff Little. It's also the same one in Matthew 28:4 when Jesus rose and the angels appeared and moved the stone and the guards that were there saw Him and fell as dead men?

Conrad Bowman. Yes sir. Yes sir. And it was for the same reason. That's in Matthew 28:4 – I'm repeating that for the benefit of the tape. The same phrase is used. In the face of the **holiness of God and His purity and His presence**, what can we do?

Several Ladies. Fall down. Fall on your face.

Conrad Bowman. That's it. That's it. You put yourself down in the dirt. Right? That's all you can do. That's all you are expected to do, is put yourself right there.

Now, I want you to see what is happening, because that speaks of unity. You see the same thing happening here in Revelation that's happening over here in the gospels, and that is happening here to the Church. Now, that's the way we learn. When you see something happen here in the OT, before Law, then during the period of Law, then during the gospels when the Kingdom was presented, and now during the Church Age, and finally in the prophecy of things to come, you can be sure that there's a consistency of message and a constancy of response that is expected there. You will find that it's the presence, and power, and character of God being displayed to mankind.

Now – I'll be right back to you, I want to finish this (someone's hand went up).

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 I am the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. Therefore, write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things. As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands – [*luchnia*] – the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven [*luchnia*] lampstands are the seven churches.

That's what you are. You are by virtue of whose you are, in relationship to God, you are, or are supposed to be, a complete lampstand, holding the gospel out for the world to see. Now if you understand that, you understand what your role is. You shouldn't do anything that hinders holding the pure gospel out. I mean that you have to know what that role is; it means it has to be primary in everything you do, not only in missions, but in your life, for that's your purpose for being.

You had one more.

Jeff Little. I was just going to add to what I said that – it's interesting, I hadn't consulted or paraphrased the living bible, but in all the other translations – the American Standard, NIV, RC, all of them say the same thing, so .....

Conrad Bowman. Yes, there's no other way to put it. There's no other way to put it. That's the way it is.

In chapter 2

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: [This is one of Paul's favorite churches] 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 that's known intimately, intimately know your deeds] and your toil [they're working] and perseverance [and they're hard working], and that you cannot tolerate evil men [they're righteous], and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles [they're skeptical – these are all good traits, there is not anything wrong with this], and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance [your

stick-too-it-tiveness] and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary.

That sounds like a sterling group of people. A group of people you want to get to know, and invite over for lunch, and things like that.

And you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. But...

And there's that great huge "but," right there in the middle of it – but, but, but, but, but – "but" always introduces a contrast. Anytime you see "but," it's like two ends of a see-saw, he has just gotten through explaining this end and "but" is the fulcrum, and now he's going to explain that which is in exact contrast to this.

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'm coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of it's place – unless you repent.

"Repent" is to change your mind, and direction. That's what the word "repentance" means. Now, what's the first love? And what does that drive you to? When the Lord Jesus Christ, through the Spirit of God, moved into your life, and opened up the eyes of your mind and heart, and you first began to understand just what it was that the Lord had done for you, what was your response?

First, it's unbelievable. Why me? If I was going to pick out a group to call my own, would it have included me? Not likely. I know more about me than I ought to. But didn't you all kind of feel that way?

Then, there was that sense of elation that, all at once I see that this is true. I can't believe that – this is absolutely true. When you run across something, and you discover it – you discover for the first time that it's actually truth, there's that warm settled feeling that comes over you from having discovered something that is absolutely true and unchangeable. That's warm and that's filling. It's satisfying to soul, and body, and spirit. It just has a calming effect on you from head to toe and through and through. That's first love in its purest form. Yes, Charlie, Yvonne?

Charles Pirtle. You have left your first love which is Me, Christ!

Conrad Bowman. That's right. You've left that.

Lady. You can't leave Him without leaving the message. You leave the message also.

Conrad Bowman. You leave the message also. You leave all that He said, and all that He is; that's what it would be. With, Norma, you know, when you accept her, you accept Early American. You know, I never heard of Early American until I met her. Early American came with her. [Laughter]. It was now preferred above everything else. So, "left your first love" is just as incongruous as me going out and buying a plastic square thing to sit on. It just wouldn't happen; right?

"Left you first love."

Phil, you were going to say something?

Phil Richman. The question is, how are they going to leave their first love, in light of what was said before?

Conrad Bowman. It's got to be deeper than that, doesn't it? That's the amazing thing to me about study, you read this passage and here's a church that's preserving, they're going through all of this testing, and yet the Lord says, you've lost your first love. Good heavens, what else could they do to demonstrate that first love? Well, it wasn't what they were doing. You can bet on that. John?

John Young. I thought they *left* their first love, they didn't *lose* it, they *left* it?

Conrad Bowman. Correct, they *left* it.

John Young. There's a difference [\[between losing it and leaving it\]](#).

Conrad Bowman. Yea, there's a difference. You know, it's just like when you first get married there's nothing she wants you to do that you're not willing to do. And then, the next thing you know, you've got something else you would rather do and, you've wandered off, and you're doing that. You still love her, and she ought to know that, [Laughter], but there are these other things that you would really like to go take care of.

John Young. We got the point [Laughter].

Conrad Bowman. Phil wasn't here last week, but he would have said, "You're meddling again."

But that's true, isn't it? You don't have to abandon something altogether to leave it, you just push it to the corner, and kind of ignore it for awhile. That's what they did, you see, that's what they were doing often. They lost that consuming love, and that focus and attention – and here's what He says is the remedy.

Therefore remember from where you have fallen...

"Remember from where you have fallen" says, don't just focus on all the good things that are going on; remember where you fell from.

Lady. If they lost it, what are they to replace it with? Self?

Conrad Bowman. That's what He's getting at, isn't He? That's exactly what He's getting at.

Lady. All about self.

Conrad Bowman. Because this is a record of all the things they've been doing, and they've lost it. "Remember, from where you've fallen," change your mind – "repent" – and direction, "and do the deeds you did at first." What did you do at first? You didn't know to do anything at first. The only thing you did at first was **adore**. That's what you did. You **adored the object of your affection**. That's it. You got married, you adored her. Whatever she said, you did. There's going to be this service. Yes, you're going. There's going to be this service. Yes, you're going. All these things going on, you're going to go. You're going to show up.

Lady. Conrad, don't we battle that every morning?

Conrad Bowman. I do.

[Comments back and forth – could not hear].

Conrad Bowman. Look at these verses; You've been persevering. You've been busy questioning the apostles, testing them. **Ministry is what they've been**

doing and ministry has pulled them away from their first love. It has pulled them away from their focus and their commitment and their central thought process on Christ. They've been crippled by ministry.

Charles Pirtle. You just do that this morning? [Laughter].

Conrad Bowman. Yvonne will talk to him later on that. But you see what happens? We get so busy trying to serve God that we lose track of the fact that He has already done the work. You remember – what's Ephesians 2:10? What did it tell us?

Lady, quoting Ephesians 2:10:

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. [Am. Std.].

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. [NIV].

Conrad Bowman. Which God prepared beforehand – the word "prepared" is "completed." Which God completed beforehand that we should walk in them. Be careful. Not, "He prepared them for us to do." He finished them, and we're to walk in those works. Oh my, child of God, we are so busy trying to finish God's work that we miss the point. He finished them already.

Gentleman. Saved by grace, brings you back to the first command.

Conrad Bowman. Sure. By grace you are saved, through faith, that not of yourselves, it's not of works, lest any man should boast, it is a gift of God. It is my firm conviction that the "it" is the faith that enabled you to latch on to Christ. And Charlie Pirtle will say "no."

Yvonne Pirtle. Don't go there, Conrad. [Laughter].

Conrad Bowman. We're not going to go there. We'll do that later on by e-mail. I'll save you all a copy of the discourse. It ought to be good.

Lady. How do you walk in it? How do you walk in it?

Conrad Bowman. How do you walk in it?

Lady. The finished works of Christ?

Conrad Bowman. Well, the first thing you do is look carefully for the footprints of God. You want to go where He's working. First place, the richest place to send a missionary is where the Spirit of God is evidently busy at work. You want to make sure you have a missionary there. Right! Because the Spirit of God is stirring up people in some place, whether it's down the street, down the block, your neighbor next door, within your own family – that's where you want to go. You want to go there and feed that with testimony to the Gospel, and be on sight when the Spirit of God works. That's what missions is all about. That's what the Church of Ephesus has lost sight of. They've gotten all together in their programs, they're persevering, and they've gotten the buses going and they've gotten everything operating, and they've gotten people coming, and they're expanding, and they love that and they want to see how to keep that going. Along the way, they've forgotten to look and see where the Spirit of God is working. They're busy working trying to attract the attention of the Spirit of God. Come here and help us. Nope! He says "come here where I'm already at work and watch me finish the job, and I'll make your joy full by allowing you to be on site when I finish it." Yes sir?

Jeff Little. Can I just emphasize the love thing a little more. In the Greek there were four words for the word "love," and we only have one. But, this is the greatest kind of love, the unconditional love...

Conrad Bowman. *Agape*. Yes sir.

Jeff Little. Right. And also, like you were saying, we're missing the main point by – He did kind of butter them up a little bit in the beginning, but if they miss love they've missed it entirely and Paul says that in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:2...

Conrad Bowman. That's not the point.

Jeff Little. And if you had faith, you can move mountains, but didn't have love...

Conrad Bowman. That's not the point of the message to the seven churches. That's not the point. That's the easiest point to lose. The point is not, if you have love, everything else falls into place. That's not it. The point is, everything else can push that love out of it. You've got to pay attention to the instructive aspects

of what He's given the Church ahead of time. Ephesians 2:10 is stronger than that. *Agape* is the motivation.

Jeff Little. 1<sup>st</sup> John 4:16 – God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.

Conrad Bowman. That's true.

Jeff Little. It that the same...

Conrad Bowman. But that has nothing to do with Church life. That doesn't have anything to do instruction about how to live the life of the Christian and walk with the Spirit of God.

Jeff Little. I don't understand how you can differentiate between the two.

Conrad Bowman. I'll be happy to discuss it with you afterwards. It's easy to do. It's two different aspects of salvation, and two different aspects of the attributes of God. But, I'll be happy to talk to you about it later.

Don Fruin. So what you're saying is that this church got so busy and so wrapped up in its own plans and development and working things out that they forgot that all they were supposed to do is worship God.

Conrad Bowman. Yea. That's right. That's right.

Someone else. That's right.

Conrad Bowman. And if they're worshipping God, then God will lead them from thing to thing that He expects them to see and witness and grow from. This is a growth business we're in. But we don't cause the growth. And so if we just follow God and walk in the footsteps where He is leading us from step to step, He will take us through what we need in order to bring out His best in us. And, the result will be that the bond of love that we share with the Father will grow, and become stronger. But that's the result. It's the motivator and the result in our life.

Yet this you do have...

Donna?

Donna Cross. The middle of this verse 5. It says, "and do the deeds you did at first."

Conrad Bowman. Yes.

Donna Cross. Now, are you saying, do their first deeds to the first love in that they were eager to follow God and be where He was working, and so to get back to that point, that your looking for and still following God's steps?

Conrad Bowman. Yes, and remember, the first deeds are deeds we did out of adoration, not out of knowledge, nor out of knowledge gained. Not out of organization, not out of anything else. It was adoration of God, and the first steps as of a child. You put that child down and you separate them from you a little bit, and they take their first halting steps toward you. That's the kind of image you want to have in first deeds. They're simple, not producing anything; they're done out of adoration, and in order to gain the approval of the Father. All you want is to see that look of delight on the face of the one you serve.

Jeff Little. So, if I understand you correctly, you're saying that the greatest command is to love God with all your heart, and the second one is to love your neighbor. And this is talking about the love of God, and the one I was talking about was love of neighbor. Is that right?

Conrad Bowman. Not quite. But within the context you're saying it, yes. But that's not quite – see, that was a different thing to a different people at a different time. The greatest commandment – He was giving that to a Jewish audience. That wasn't to a Church audience. That was to a Jewish audience, and He's telling them what replaced the Law. So, that was as different thing for a different time and place. It's like mixing apples and oranges.

Irma Davis. I just want to say I perceive that it was meaning that our not having that passion that – wanting to have a more personal relationship with Him. Losing that zeal; that's what I perceived it to mean; losing that zeal for God. I'm not saying wholeheartedly, but losing the edge.

Conrad Bowman. Let me caution you. Irma, let me caution you. Generally, not you particularly, but generally; we want to be careful that when we're taking a passage apart, we do not begin to read into the passage what we feel about the passage. What we want to do is read out of the passage what it is saying. Now,

once we do that, and we've got the passage in front of us the way it was delivered to the people at the time, we can let it feed us the way we want to, or, the way we sense that it's affecting us. But first, you have to let the passage speak to you. And, you really need to study the passage in terms of what it's saying. What was He saying to that Church at Ephesus? Then after that, we can deal with how we feel about it.

Now, let me move on just a little bit further. Yes sir?

Bill O'Fiel. What it's saying to me, is that they formed the church and worshipped God, and now they're pursuing growing the church through their own ideas, whatever, and not letting God grow the church.

Conrad Bowman. Remember what Ephesus was. Ephesus was an epicenter of intellectualism. I mean it was the crown jewel in that area, with temples to Diana – in terms of religion, in terms of philosophy, in everything. Ephesus was an educated place. They had universities in town, they had medical schools in town, they had all kinds of things around. And they worshipped the intellect. They were so proud of themselves, and what they could accomplish, and what they could understand, and what they could grasp. And their danger, repeatedly, was to slide off into a humanism that was shaping the church, which is exactly what you're saying Bill. Charlie? This is a chatty bunch this morning. I usually don't run into this.

Charles Pirtle. I think another way that helps me understand this talking to the Church in Ephesus – I think it's applicable in all the churches today.

Conrad Bowman. Absolutely.

Charles Pirtle. What their first "works" were, had become their doctrine. Had become their theology – works!

Conrad Bowman. Right, and it was their works, their patterning, their assessment of one another, according to what they were doing.

Lady. Right.

Conrad Bowman. Yes. A good assessment. Their works had become their theology.

Verse 6.

Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans,  
which I also hate.

You know what the doctrine of Nicolaitans was? They accepted clergy. That was it. There is no end to that sentence. They accepted clergy. They accepted clergy as being a group of people who had a closer connection to God than they had. They believed that you could go through clergy to get to God. That was the Doctrine of Nicolaitans, in its rawest form.

Charles Pirtle. They believed that they **[clergy]** had a special gift.

Conrad Bowman. That's right. If you had something you needed to pray for, you went to the clergy and they prayed for you, and God would listen to them where He might not listen to you.

They had this separation between laity and the clergy.

Conrad Bowman. That's right. We're awash in that same idea today. We are surrounded by it, and they're selling their services at huge prices.

Yes ma'am, Barbara?

Barbara Morris. Can you go back and talk about the last part of verse 5.

Conrad Bowman. The last part of 5. You mean about the removal of the lampstand out of its place unless you repent?

Barbara Morris. Yes.

Conrad Bowman. Sure, that shouldn't take a lot of explaining. God says, if you don't change your mind and stop doing these things just to impress Me, I'm going to remove your lampstand out of its place. You're not going to be a platform from which the gospel is offered. That's going to go and the gospel will be offered somewhere else by some other means – not there. If there's one thing that marks the Church today, in many of its manifestations, it is that the gospel is simply not there; it's just not there. It's gone. Many churches have everything. They've got thousands, if not tens of thousands or more, of people coming in attendance – but the gospel is not there. They look nice, they're relaxed. They've got programs every day of the week. They've got everything under the sun. You

can get counsel there. You can bowl. You can play tennis. You can go to men's morning, and women's nights, and young people's mid-afternoons, you can do all those things that we associate with a family life center; but the gospel is not there. What's the point? What's the point of their being open? The lampstand has been removed from the place. It looks like a church, and smells like a church, and acts like a church. It's got everything except the gospel coming right out of the middle of it – which is the reason for its being. Our responsibility is to guard our own body so that it does not become one of these dead places. And that's the responsibility of every one of us.

Phil Richman. So this church would not have had clergy, in your opinion? [Laughter].

Conrad Bowman. [Sigh]. A word here, and a word here. Alright. You're a dirty dog. [Laughter]. There are two lines of thought on this.

[Banter back and forth].

Conrad Bowman. They had to have elders because every assembly has to have elders. They could have been rank amateur elders. The ice gets real thin at this point. There was a paper written by John Nelson Darby in the first half of the 1800's, around 1840, that the Very Notion of a Clergy is the Sin Against the Holy Spirit in This Dispensation. Now, you let that soak in a minute. That was the name of the article. That the very notion of a clergy is the sin against the Holy Spirit in this dispensation. I study that at least once a month – it's not that large – it's about 25 pages long. It came out of a very old journal. It's worth considering. I'm not saying jump on that, but I am telling you that it's worth considering.

Gentleman. When you see it in action today.

Conrad Bowman. You do see it in action today. I don't want to talk about this anymore, this is really painful, because you can see the dilemma. Where in the world would a young man – what would you do with a Tom Douthit? Here's a guy who loves the Lord with every fiber of his being. He is a superb pastor and teacher. You know what happens, though? In your mind, when you get to the point in your life where you have a problem in your life and you need help, you won't call me, or you won't call Phil, or you won't call one another. You want a visit from your "Pastor." You have elevated him in your own experience up out of the area where he's serving God the way he should, and you're trying to insert him firmly between you and the Lord – you're a Nicolaitan. You have become a

Nicolaitan, in your own mind. In your mind, you've become a Nicolaitan; He didn't do it. You did it, and if that happens often enough, how is a guy going to fight against that? How is he going to fight against it, when we've got him outnumbered 2000 to 1? It's up to us to protect him. It's up to us to protect him; so, when you get a visit in the hospital, and it's from somebody else other than one of the pastoral staff, you remember that you didn't get a second-string visit. [Laughter]. Right? Isn't that the way it is? You feel just a little slighted if he doesn't show up.

Joe Morris. But what the brethren did with what Darby said was, they brought it forward and they said, well, we won't have a pastor.

Conrad Bowman. That's exactly what they said; "We're not going to have a pastor."

Joe Morris. So, what they did is wait around until the Spirit moved somebody to preach.

Conrad Bowman. And the strongest nosed personality in the room became the hierarchy. They didn't escape from a blooming thing.

Joe Morris. That's right. Exactly.

Conrad Bowman. You see how flawed we are. Now, you pushed us right over the edge into this – but it's OK. It's OK, because we got to the heart of this thing, which is where it ought to be. It's up to us to live according to the dictates of what God went to all the trouble to raise up an apostle – a Jew for heavens sake – and send him into the middle of the Gentiles with all of his Jewishness to teach them and us how to live as Gentile Christians. That's just – that's insane. I wouldn't have done it that way. I wouldn't have picked me to reach, I wouldn't have picked Paul to reach me. Right? Thank God His ways are not our ways. And it's 10:30 – isn't it time to quit?

I want to stop here. There is no end to this, and we'll continue it.

Phil Richman. I want to wholly agree that it is. Instead of being critical of what's around you, and there's plenty around you to be critical of on all levels to make you look better. Just start living it, you know, just start living it, wherever you are, in your workplace, in your service around these buildings, whatever it may be. That's the key, you know. I have some old notes from our friend Brian Myers,

remember him? He went through this very diligently, and he hit on a lot of these points, and it was – I think I will save that for another time. Brian had to say about this. But really – you know it is hitting at the heart – you know a bible church. This stuff – you've got to be very careful, because it's – he calls it – orthodoxy without love. Hyperactivity of a Pharisee. Hyperactive, over committed, doing what the church wants you to do, what you want to do, labor without love, doctrine without devotion. Basically he said, they knew their bible, but they had a shell of a Christian life. They weren't living. You know, it was kind of like they were schizophrenic about how they were behaving. And I tell you, you don't have to do it here. Matter of fact, this may not be the best place for you to do it. You may want to do it with your neighbor. You may want to reflect this at your workplace. That's where it really is – among your broader family. It's not all in the congregation..... Well, thanks for coming, and we'll do more of this, God willing, pray for our teacher, Conrad, and each other, and this coming week, remember those prayer requests. Particularly for those who are physically hurting, and we want to know what you've got. Write down your prayer requests. Write down your comments and questions, and give them to us, and we'll try to get to all of them. If there's something confusing you, ask us and maybe we'll be able to answer it.

Closing Prayer by Phil Richman. "Father, we thank you, we praise You for who You are, and for the fact that we have Your Spirit, Lord, and we have ..... and lead us into all truth. We know Your Word. Boy, it's an amazing growth experience. What we've known before, it may not be totally valid. And we admit that to You, and just lead us to what you want us to do. We thank you in Jesus name. Amen.