

# Who Do You Think You Are? Part Two

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[ 0 : 00 ] We have our Vision Morning next Saturday, a vision for the next five years of the church. How do you go about a Vision Morning?! You could deal with it in all sorts of ways.

! We're not a PLC. We're not looking at our bottom line. We're not thinking how more productive we could be, how our margins could be extended, how our losses could be diminished. We're not looking at it in a business sense. We're trying to do it in a way which hopefully mirrors the way in which God's people have throughout centuries tried to look into the futures that God has for them.

And I suggest, and what I'm doing this morning is really repeating what I dealt with five weeks ago, so you can pick something up off the internet if you want to hear that message.

But I'm going to rapidly go through those things that we looked at five weeks ago. To answer this issue of what do we do about the next five years as a church, our vision for the next five years, we need to remember who God is according to the Bible.

[ 1 : 15 ] That is such a fundamental point. We can get very used to living the Christian life, the routines of the Christian life, and it is all very repetitive.

But how important it is for us to turn our minds back and to remember who God is. Wasn't that the kind of teaching that was given to the people of Israel constantly as they went on their way into the promised land?

Remember the God who brought you out of slavery. Remember the God who provided for you in the wilderness.

Remember the God who brought his judgments upon sinfulness. Remember the God who is unchanging. Remember the God who is far greater than the problems that are like mountains before you.

Remember this God. And we have exactly the same reasons and cause to remember God in that way. The God of the Bible. We need to remember who we are according to the Bible.

[ 2 : 27 ] There are many things that are said about the people of God. And it's that to which I'm turning this morning under this phrase, who do you think you are?

Who do you think you are? We're trying to understand how we are envisaged as God's people. I suggested that there were some inadequate models that were really not very helpful for us, although they might come more immediately to mind.

And perhaps if we're rather lazy about this subject, we might think in these terms. I suggested that it's not adequate to think about a church as a school or a university.

You do not come here merely to receive knowledge. Nor is it a holiday park. As nice as it is for us to meet together in the way that we do, church and being church is not about recreation fundamentally.

We enjoy our times of fun like last night. But that is not fundamentally what we're about as a church. Nor is it about experience.

[ 3 : 42 ] We do not placard ourselves and suggest, this is the place to come to have some amazing experience you've never had in your life before.

And as I say that, I think that isn't amazing that we should become Christians and be born again of God's Spirit. But that's not experience in the way that the world deems experience, some adrenaline rush.

Something that you could boast about to your friends afterwards and put up on Facebook. Church is not actually like that. And there are hard times in church life.

And there are times where nothing seems to be happening much. Church. But it's still church. Nor, and I say this carefully, is a church a hospital or a clinic.

And it's really very interesting to see the way in which the apostles wrote to a suffering, needy people. People who had very little in their lives.

[ 4 : 49 ] But there's very little that's offered. You could at all link up with the idea of a hospital or a clinic. And yet that's what the world would like the church to be, basically.

It's a kind of a worldly vision of the church. But it's not biblical. And this is the reason why these models are unhelpful.

Because they're not biblical. You can't find them in the Bible. People, they're self-focused. They're about me. And there's no obvious place for the God of the Bible in these pictures.

It's about coming somewhere where I can receive. But from whom? And why? For what purpose? And they're consumer-based.

I don't need to say more about that. Because it's a constant message. But we need to just keep on remembering. We live in a society that thinks in terms of how can my needs be satisfied?

[ 5 : 53 ] But appropriate models need to be biblical, of course. They need to, I would suggest, could be tested against this.

That they should have a focus on others. And they must have a place for the God of the Bible. And so we thought about a family. And I have some texts up on the screen.

I won't read all of them there. But this is a very dominant picture, isn't it? From the very beginnings when promise was made to Abraham about his family, the church of Jesus Christ, the people of God, are regarded as family.

They're also regarded as a body. And there is a great amount of material. And 1 Corinthians 12 is especially helpful on that part.

As is also the picture of a building. You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house. And here's one which isn't used quite so often.

[ 7 : 00 ] But it's here in 1 Corinthians 3. A field. You are God's field. And isn't this a wonderful one? The one has to bring in.

Come, I will show you the bride. What an amazing breadth of picture language God provides for us in this way.

They're all different. They have their own importance. They have their own messages attached to them. And we need all of that to get a rounded, full-orbed picture of the church of Jesus Christ.

We need to understand how precious the church is in God's sight. Yes, this church is precious in God's sight. From heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride.

With his own blood he bought her. And for her life he died. We're uniquely loved.

[ 8 : 03 ] We have no revelation that says that in all creation there is any people so loved as the people who belong to Jesus Christ.

What a blessing. We're called to be fruitful. And a church needs to recognize that. Individually we need to recognize it.

Where is the fruit? That was a constant refrain throughout the Old Testament times. God was coming into his field. Where is the fruit? Where is the fruit of my presence amongst you?

Is there greater trust? Is there greater obedience? Is there greater turning from sinfulness? Are people living to the glory of God? A field.

A building. I call that useful beauty. Useful beauty. A church should be an extremely useful place. Body speaks to us about difference and dependence.

[ 9 : 10 ] One part cannot live without another. And we need to completely constantly remember that. That we need one another. And we have different functions.

And a family has relationships. We are related to one another. We share one head.

One head of the body. One builder. One farmer. And a wonderful bridegroom.

And this is how God offers himself to us. Especially in the person of his son. Jesus Christ. These are biblical pictures. These are pictures where God has his proper place.

And these are pictures that. Always have that drift of focusing upon others. Rather than ourselves. One another in this room. Others in the rooms around us.

[ 10 : 15 ] In the world. Appropriate models. I want to suggest. I suggested last time that there. Might be one more.

Bloody a few more. But there's one more which. I think is often missed. And we read of it. In Ephesians 6. Particularly verses 10 to 18.

And it's the model. Of an army. That. The church of Jesus Christ. Is an army. Under the captainship.

Of. Jesus Christ. Depending upon one another. Fighting for a common cause. Jesus Christ. Interesting.

This passage in Ephesians 6. Because it's not addressed. To Timothy. Or Titus. Or one of the leaders. Of the early church. But it's addressed. To a community. Of God's people.

[ 11 : 11 ] Meeting together. No doubt. Rather like we're doing. On the Lord's Day morning. And. Good for us. To read earlier. About. The children being addressed.

Children. Says Paul. Abey your parents. Children. Were in that meeting. Then he goes on. To talk about slaves. Then he talks about masters. Well it's a pretty big picture. Which we can identify with. If we just. Change some of the language. To think in terms of it. Being about families. About. Our workplaces. About our managers.

About. Life. And to all these people. He now addresses. Verses 10 to 18. So please read these words.

Not in the context. Of being addressed. Particularly. To the elders. Of the church. But being addressed. To all of us. Finally.

[ 12 : 11 ] Be strong in the Lord. And in his mighty power. And this is addressed. To every member. Of the church. And we might.

At random. Pick up. The vocabulary. Of this. Section. Where we read. Of power. And powers. And struggle. And standing.

Firm. And fearlessly. And we might read. Of armor. And breastplate. And shield. And helmet. And sword. You can't get away.

From this picture. Can you? There's absolutely no mistaking. What this is about. It's about fighting. It's about. Soldiering. And it's addressed.

To all of us. And therefore. Although the word is not used. I think. We can confidently say. That this. Is suggesting. That a right picture. Of the church.

[ 13 : 04 ] Is to regard it. As an army. So why is this. Model. Missing. From the lists. That more easily. Come to mind. And to answer that question.

I'd like to suggest. Three. World views. This is very simple. Simplified. Language. But I want to suggest.

Three world views. That. I think we might find. In the western world. So. We could start. With a world view. That says. That. Life is explainable.

By a mixture of science. And rationalism. Plus a factor. That I'll call. That's life. Can't explain it. By science.

Or rationalism. But. Things happen. Bad things happen. Inexplicable things happen. Quirky things happen. Which we can't explain.

[ 14 : 03 ] And we put that into the box. Called. That's life. And that's. Where many. Many people are. Today. But there's some. Who would add to that.

Mix. Something. Which will be along. The lines of. Yes. But. I can sense. That there is. In this world. Something that we might call. Spiritual good.

And they might go further. And say. Well maybe it's. A supreme power. This is what. Those. On. Going through. The AA course. Are encouraged to do. Isn't it.

To think about. The supreme power. So. Well. Something out there. To which I can. Look. Or get to the point. Where. Say.

Well. This. Could be. The person. Of God. That would be. Another. World view. And there are many people. Who would. Sign up to that. If you had. A census. Taken in Brighton.

[ 14 : 58 ] Today. There would be still. Many people. Not in church. But who actually. Sign up to that. Particular view. And then here's another. World view. Which is.

Bolting on to. World view two. This thought. That. Alongside. The spiritual good. The supreme power. And the person of God. There is also. Spiritual bad.

There's active evil. In the world. And there's even. Someone. Who we might call. The person of the devil. Now.

Where do you sit. In those world views. I'm not asking you. To put your hand up. And say. Where you are on that. But. You know. To honestly say.

Don't worry for the moment. About. What it says. On our statement of faith. You can read that. In the. In the. Lobby out there. About the statement of faith. But. Where are you in practice. In the world view.

[15:58] How does your life operate. What. What do you. What do you. Drift towards. When you think about. Life. And the big issues of life. What do you most.

Readily identify with. I think that. Many people. Are somewhere in this. Sort of. One and a half. To two. Realm. One. But I wonder. Where we are. As Christians. Where we are. As Christians. When we're facing. That particular. Question. I think of a. A Brighton Christian. If you could. Pigeon hole. Someone like that. And say. A Brighton Christian. We tend not to sing. The songs. That Christians. Once sang. Charlotte Elliot.

[16:58] Who actually was. A resident of Brighton. Wrote. Christians. Seek not yet. Repose. Cast thy dreams. Of ease away. Thou art. In the midst. Of foes.

Watch and pray. Or. John Neill. Christian. Dost thou see them. On the holy ground. How the powers of darkness. Compass thee. Around. Or. Fight the good fight. With all thy might.

Which we haven't sung. For a long time. Onward Christian soldiers. Soldiers of Christ. Arise. Stand up. Stand up. For Jesus. Ye soldiers.

Of the cross. Who is on the Lord's side. Who will serve the king. When were all these written? When were all these written? 19th century.

[17:53] 19th century and before. Through the times of the revivals. In the 1740s. And particularly the 19th century. So.

It was. It wasn't that shocking. That William Booth. Called the organization that he founded. The Salvation Army. Why? Because Christians thought in those.

Those ways. We tend not to pray the prayers. That Christians once prayed. I quote from a prayer. Oh Lord God. Thou art my protecting arm. Fortress. Refuge. Shield. Buckler. Fight for me. And my foes must flee. We tend not to think the thoughts.

About the Christian life. That Christians once had. Charles Spurgeon. Always good for a quote. I've never won an inch of the way to heaven. Without fighting for it.

[18:57] It strikes me. He said. That conflict is the principal feature. Of the Christian life. This side of heaven. That's an interesting. Allow for preachers exaggeration.

It strikes me. That conflict. Is the principal feature. Of the Christian life. This side of heaven. J.C. Ryle. In his normal robust manner.

Wrote a book on this subject. And he says. There's no holiness. Without a warfare. There's no holiness. Without a warfare. Interestingly.

Something changed. At the back end. Of the 19th century. When people began to say. There is such a thing. As holiness. Without a warfare. Where you could take it.

By faith. You could let go. Let God. Perhaps that's.

[19:57] Seeped into. Our psyche. Maybe. So what's changed. Why. Why are we not. The people. Who. Gravitate.

Towards those songs. Who even as we sing them. Think. This is a bit quaint. This is a bit old.

Perhaps. Perhaps. The culture. We live in. The culture.

We live in. In a few months time. We'll be remembering. That a hundred years ago. there were lads who went out from Brighton and volunteered to go out to France to fight in the first war.

They volunteered. They pressed to the recruiting offices. They lied about their age. There was a tidal wave of support for the idea of going out to be soldiers to fight for the country.

It was rare for people to say this isn't a good idea. I don't want to be part of this. I just want to stay back. But I think if something similar were to happen today you wouldn't get a load of young Brighton lads flocking to a recruiting office, would you?

[21:12] We live in a different age. There's rejections of ideas of fighting and violence.

We crave peace. No doubt. Because of some of the enormities of the last two world wars.

They were naive. They were over optimistic. They were unrealistic. They lived in a different age. But they did what they did. They thought what they thought.

And if we'd been sitting here in 1914 most of us would have felt along those lines as well. Without any sense of embarrassment or double thinking about it.

We live in a very, very different culture. And you can never think that as a Christian you're immune from the cultural thinking around you.

[ 22 : 18 ] We're not. We take it on board. We receive it. The culture we live in. That's what's changed. But also what's changed is the 21st Western Christian culture has changed as well from 19th century Christian culture.

Understandably we react to extremism. And we've all read stories and come across people who have taken the sort of subject matter that I'm going to describe to an extreme. And have been obsessed and have elevated this particular picture of the church to a place which is abnormal. And just as there were people in the 50s who were looking for reds under the beds in America there are people who are seeing the devil's activity in everything.

I think even dear old Martin Luther might have slightly swung into that category as he went on his undoubtedly terrifying journey to meet his inquisitors and worms in the 1500s.

And he said the tiles on the roof were all devils about to fall on top of him. but he got a lot right.

[ 23 : 41 ] Reaction to extremism. Understandable we're always on a pendulum. Churches are always on pendulums reacting to one extreme or another. So one can understand that.

We find it hard to believe in this sort of world order. We find it hard to believe that this world actually could have the devil at work in it. That there could be a principle of evil.

These things we neatly box up and put into a corner and we say these are the extremes. These are not what touches most people's lives. I was reading this week it's the I don't know how many years ago since Charles Manson and his terrible little group of people over in the states committed atrocities over there.

They're all in prison now. Their lives are sort of a mess and a wreck and so forth. Although two actually become Christians. Charles Manson personification of evil this is what society always does. Manson child molesters sexual molesters today you know they're in that box aren't they? the personification of evil and so we can neatly put a small proportion a very tiny number of people and their actions into a small box and put it right into the corner.

[ 25 : 01 ] The rest of the world is in a benign environment. It is hard for us to believe in this sort of world order. It's hard for us as Christians to believe in this sort of world order.

I had a great day yesterday. It was a lovely day. The sun was shining like today. It wasn't thunder and lightning. It was a beautiful day. The steam train ran through. London Road was awash with lovely people.

Nice conversations. Happiness exuding everywhere. Brass plans playing. Families enjoying the day etc. And then turning up in the evening to a lovely music evening and so forth.

All is well with the world. It's a fantastic thing isn't it? Especially with the sun shining. We find it hard to believe in a world order where this can be true at the same time as there being a principle of evil in the world and an active devil at work in the world.

And the thought that we should actually have to battle in our lives. We have to fight things in our lives. Can't we just go with the flow? No. And we'd like to believe that all problems can be solved now.

[ 26 : 20 ] And really the whole of 20th century has been replete with Christianity which has constantly addressed this issue. We can solve your problems now.

Come to this meeting. Have your problems solved. How many people have been so badly upset and disappointed and had their hearts hardened as a result of finding out the reality that actually in this life there are many problems that don't get solved immediately.

There are so many things that we have to live with in this fallen world because we are too a fallen people. And so we live in make-believe land if we accept this kind of Western Christian culture that well there's an answer out there somewhere to my deepest need.

Well there is an answer. But it's not the kind of answer that pop the pill and it's going to sort your life out. The answer that's given in the Bible is that we have a life and death struggle for the whole of our lives.

Isn't that attractive? Absolutely not. Is that a good way of recruiting to the Christian cause? Well it has no appeal at all does it to most people to be saying that.

[ 27 : 49 ] But we have to be realistic biblical Christians. And I challenge you to read your Bible and to see it in any other way. So that's what's changed.

And the result I believe is this that we live in a play with two actors God and me but actually there's always a third person the devil. Just repeat that.

We live in a play with two actors just God and me but actually there's always a third person the devil. Just think of Jesus' own experience in words because people say when you go down this territory oh that must be Old Testament stuff.

Actually the Old Testament doesn't have a great deal to say on the subject matter of the devil. Look in your Bibles and you'll see a great book there of Job but apart from that there's only a sort of a vague threatening echo but when Jesus came on earth Jesus of the soul and of the mouth Jesus that people are prepared to respect and look up to it was Jesus who was led into the desert to be tempted by the devil.

It was Jesus who said to one of his best friends get behind me Satan. It was Jesus who said to his followers I saw Satan falling.

[ 29 : 29 ] Is he a nutter? Rather we have to say he was able to see the world with spiritual eyes.

He was able to see the realities of what was going on. And the apostles carry on in their experience and their teaching.

They give the same unchanged message. Paul says at one point we're not ignorant of his devices. He says be careful because the devil doesn't always dress up with horns with a nasty tail behind him.

Sometimes he appears even as an angel of light to deceive if it were possible the elect. and we come to the final book of the Bible and in Revelation the end time picture is is rich and overflowing with the language of battle and conflict and a resolution that will only come about through enormous cost.

Cosmic warfare on a grand scale. there is a war. We look at a few text verses here.

[ 30 : 57 ] There is a war within us. Romans 7 21 to 23 you'll see the pages of the church Bible before you there. Romans 7 21 to 23 I find this law at work when I want to do good evil is right there with me.

Paul might have said weakness because that's the language we'd use but actually he uses the word evil. He said when I want to do good evil is right there with me.

Yes nice people all of us nice people evil is right there with you. for in my inner being I delight in God's law but I see another law at work in the members of my body waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

What a wretched man I am. there's a battle there's a tension in Paul's spirit all around us 1 John 2 15 to 17 1 John 2 15 to 17 Do not love the world or anything in the world if anyone loves the world the love of the father is not in him for everything in the world the cravings of sinful man the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does comes not from the father but from the world the world and its desires pass away times when I get sort of troubled by this issue and find it hard to believe in this world order you just have to read between the lines of the news stuff and a few times in this last week

I've just read stuff in the news and I thought on the face of it everything seems nice and ordered and straightforward but then when you delve into people's lives you see something which is which is just bad which is just wrong there's a surprising amount of evil that is sort of lurking there there were some comments from an actress this last week and I won't go into the detail of it but it was just did you say that do you actually believe that do you actually say that that's such a surprise this is the world we we live in a world that we just see in a superficial way but a world that according to the bible has the tentacles of the prince of the power of the air at work in there because there is a direction by the devil there is a strategy by the devil which has to do with his attacking us individually and his attacking us through the environment in which we live so

[ 34 : 14 ] Peter says quite plainly by warning be self controlled and alert your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour it's a terrible picture isn't it the enemy should go around like that looking for someone to devour looking for the opportunity resist him standing firm in the faith because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings we're called to fight and to overcome many passages in revelation I think every single church is addressed in this way they're called to overcome that's going to be what the epitaph that's written upon their lives they overcame if you don't overcome you have no entrance into heaven and the presence of Jesus Christ definition of a Christian each of those seven churches they overcame there were battles they fought they overcame they overcame

they overcame they came to the end of their lives and they overcame it wasn't pretty it wasn't pleasant it wasn't nice it was very troubling their faith was under attack they struggled but they overcame they got over the finish line we are soldiers in an army and why does this matter so why does this matter it matters because it's

God's truth it's God's truth and everything which is connected with God's truth matters the first thing to say not a question of is it pragmatically helpful what I'm saying this morning but it's God's truth so there is something which is very important for all of us to understand about the world in which we are and to embrace God's glory is diminished if we deny part of his truth if we have no space in our lives for his truth we say that's just too difficult for me to be handling at the moment no no it needs to be embraced because we give glory to God by acknowledging his truth because we're called to fight in this battle we are all under orders this week a French gentleman who is now 97 revealed a piece of paper that he was asked to write in the lead up to D-Day to prepare the French for the invasion of the allied forces on 31st of May 1944

Jean-Louis Cremier Brilac sat in his study in Mayfair and typed out the D-Day orders for the people of France these were the instructions to be read over the French service of the BBC telling the population how to react once they learned the allies had landed the document four pages of flimsy paper marked secret type written with annotations in pencil has been in his possession ever since he recalls with perfect clarity I was secretary of the free French propaganda committee there were five or six of us and my job was to draw up the D-Day orders taking into account our discussions we knew that the invasion was coming but of course we didn't know exactly when we had to be ready the instructions were intended for all French men and women not organized in or attached to a resistance group of course there were issues about how it was all going to be done and his document says this all French must consider themselves as engaged in total war against the invader in order to liberate their homeland it is not a question of choosing to fight or not to fight or when to fight they are all soldiers under orders every

Frenchman who is not or not yet a fighter must consider himself an auxiliary to the fighters well the Lord Jesus Christ has won a wonderful victory the D-Day at Calvary has produced a wonderful victory and now we're called to be in his army to be pressing forward the battles of the kingdom of Jesus Christ and just like those French people in June 1944 we're all called to be soldiers whoever you are whatever your age whatever your gender you're called to be a soldier you're called to fight the battle we're called to fight it together the battle is on it is not as in September 1939 a phony war when everybody expected that something was going to happen but nothing actually did for months but the war is not phony there's a real war going on there's a war in this city if we had eyes to see it we could interpret the signs around us there's a war for our souls there's a war for our future because if we're not fighting we're probably losing if there's no fight in your life about the matters to do with the kingdom of

Jesus Christ you're probably going backwards because we need to realize our constant need for God's help how needy we are just to raise this subject matter this morning I don't know what it does to you but it makes me feel how needy I am for God's help in my life every day how much I need his protection and surely in the Lord's prayer this is revealed to us isn't it what Jesus says to his disciples this is how you should pray lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil lead us not into temptation what does that mean many different commentators have different views on that but I think it is along the lines of don't allow us to be brought into that place where the temptation is too strong but deliver us from evil that's

[ 40 : 51 ] Jesus prayer offered as a sample an exemplar for all of his people and for further reading you cannot do better than read Pilgrim's Progress now who I could ask two questions who has got a copy of Pilgrim's Progress at home okay that's good but it's actually it's not amazing do you know how many copies of Pilgrim's Progress have been printed it is estimated 250 million it's the seventh biggest selling book in the whole world ever 250 million right you've got it in your bookcase but how many people have actually read it that's really interesting some people haven't got it at all but they've read it I have one copy I've got two at home but if you've not read Pilgrim's Progress you should read Pilgrim's Progress I know of no better exposition of the nature of spiritual warfare put in a pastoral compassionate relevant and helpful manner than

Pilgrim's Progress it was written in 16 whatever believe me this is dynamite this is very good news if you're struggling to think what's the next book I'm going to read I'm not reading anything at the moment what should I read next you cannot do better than read this there are two parts of Pilgrim's

Progress and then there's Christian and his wife and so forth read Pilgrim's Progress that's the first thing if you just feel it's too big a spiritual warfare is about and the way in which through the word of God and by the power of the spirit you can be a conqueror which is what we all want to be so see me after if you want to have more inspiration about Pilgrim's Progress but you can pick it up very cheaply it's a classic any second hand bookshop will have a copy of this why does this matter for us as a church because the devil is in the business of trying to destroy churches if it's a victory for the devil to be able to destroy a single

Christian's life and he does how much greater a victory it is for him to destroy a church and he will do that and he has done that and he's doing it today by and I give you a few examples here false or inadequate teaching you thought I was going to say something different number one one to say false or inadequate teaching is the death of a church isn't it a true church of Jesus Christ is founded upon the doctrine of the apostles and please do not think that just because we have a fine history of teaching in this church that that would always be the case if it were all left to just run and run and run it's a battle for us to maintain a high biblical standard of teaching as Paul said to the Ephesians I have not failed to declare to you the whole counsel of God please pray for the teaching and preaching ministry of Calvary

Church as we go into the future there are battles that will have to be fought in two or three years time that are not the battles we're going to have to fight now there are issues that we're having to face as the issue on marriage and divorce that Phil's going through at the moment where every time you're hearing it you're thinking well that's not quite how the world is looking at this issue so it requires courage it requires courage for us to actually take a bible standard to keep on reading and understanding the word of God in the way that it should be read and understood by the broken testimony of spiritual leaders and that's devastating isn't it and pray God that you never be in a church situation where that happens because that is so destructive where a spiritual leader's testimony is broken not just by an adequate teaching but by some misbehavior of some kind or another that is absolutely devastating the devil laughs people are damaged for life because of that by division amongst us

I don't take it for granted at all I'm delighted at the measure of unity amongst us all but again we need to take seriously what it says in the epistles where it says strive to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace that's the instruction isn't it strive battle battle to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace because it's very very easy for something to crop up and you just allow it to go on and you're not prayerful about it you're not interrupting you're not saying this isn't right there's a conversation needed here I don't want something to get out of hand divisions by discouragement people have just given up they've just given up by something that's happened in their lives that destroys the church and by making us self satisfied as was the church in the odysseo who said

[ 46 : 23 ] I'm rich I've got everything I need and I have to say we can be in that dangerous position ourselves because we can say yeah we are a united church we do have good teaching there's a lot of money coming towards the building all these are positive things aren't they but you know watch out watch out because that's that's the route to self-satisfaction isn't it you know comparing ourselves with others and saying well actually you know pretty good well what did the apostle say to the Lord Jesus Christ said to the church in the Aedicea well you don't know you're blind you're poor you're wretched you're naked that's how I see it you know superficially everything's fine but this matters to us but but but or and what a great saviour we have what a great saviour we have you see the battle belongs to the Lord it is our battle but the battle belongs to the Lord it is

Jesus who came and was the only person who fought adequately against Satan it was Jesus against who all the battalions the powers and principalities and evil were poured out upon his human life and it was Jesus who conquered brilliantly it was Jesus who it said there's no temptation he's been tempted in all points just as we are just as we are you come here today and you think of like you know you don't know the temptations that I have the issues Jesus was tempted in every way like we are yet without sin yet without sin because he conquered through his trust in God and his use of the word of God it was Jesus who went to that cross which was the devil's great throw of the dice wasn't it in so many ways to kill the son of God but it was

Jesus who was willing was willing to do exactly what the father wanted him to do to finish the work that God had given him to do and it was Jesus who was declared victorious as a conqueror over sin and the effect of sin death broken the powers of hell we stand and bask in the glory of the work of

Jesus Christ and this is our confidence this is the reason why we say a but to everything that we've just been talking about because we have one who has conquered and through his strength and through his work we have salvation and we look forward to the certain triumph of God and his people which is surely what the book of Revelation is about where the people there were suffering they were confused they felt where is this all going where is this all heading and so you read Revelation you see it is heading in a certain direction it's heading in a certain direction where there's going to be a full final ultimate overwhelming visible victory of the work of God through his son Jesus Christ and so I end by reading a passage from that very point Revelation 19 says I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse whose rider is called faithful and true with justice he judges and makes war his eyes are like blazing fire you've heard that before haven't you Revelation 1 on his head are many crowns he has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself he is dressed in a robe dipped in blood and his name is the word of God the armies of heaven were following him riding on white horses dressed in fine linen white and clean out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations he will rule them with an iron scepter he treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God almighty on his robe and his thigh he has this name written king of kings and lord of lords father how wonderful it is for us to know that we we are following on behind our great captain of salvation the one who has gone before the one who has blazed the way the one who has won the victories the one who has conquered brilliantly in the cross defeated satan and all his foes and we pray our father that we would always be living simply and only in that gracious power recognizing him acknowledging him bringing him into every situation of our lives asking that he would be the lord and the conqueror asking that he would fill our vision and our hope that he would be our desire and we want to be his followers and we want to be those who are riding behind on those horses with linen fine and clean knowing his righteousness upon us we want to be those we want to sign up again freshly to be your followers to be soldiers who are not ashamed to be marching under the banner of Jesus Christ help us to be wholehearted help us to be full and rich in these matters and continue to teach us through your word we ask this in Jesus name Amen