

Turn Around The Call Of Grace

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 January 2013

Preacher: Darrell Johnson

[0 : 00] Our text this morning is the 11th chapter of the last book of the Bible. The 11th chapter of this drama that is the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Through brilliant and subtle interweaving of images and symbolism, we are going to be taken more deeply into grace. Into the grace, the unbounded grace of which the choir has just sung.

Although, it may not feel like grace on first reading. In fact, on first reading, it's going to feel like everything but grace.

As I read the text out loud in a few minutes, you might even say to yourself, Why are we bothering giving our attention to this?

You will very likely say about many of the sentences and the phrases, What is that about? A number of times this past week, I have said to the one who inspired the text, the Lord Jesus, Do you really want me to read and preach this text in Vancouver?

[1 : 23] And each time I've had to do what I invite you to do, And that is to trust that Jesus has a really good reason for putting on this part of his apocalyptic drama.

Grace. Grace. Grace. Grace. Grace. Grace. Grace. Grace. It turns out that this brilliant, subtle interweaving of images and symbolism is going to lead us more deeply into grace.

Into the grace that calls us to turn around. Grace always calls us to turn around and come home.

If you are able, would you please stand for the reading of this text?

Revelation chapter 11 verses 1 to 18. And there was given me, John the apostle, there was given me a measuring rod like a staff. And someone said, rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship in it.

[2 : 40] And leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations and they will tread underfoot the holy city for 42 months.

And I will grant authority to my two witnesses and they will prophesy for 1260 days clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.

And if anyone desires to harm them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone would desire to harm them in this manner, he must be killed. These have the power to shut the sky in order that rain may not fall during the days of their prophesying.

And they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to smite the earth with every plague as often as they desire. And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes out of the abyss will make war with them and overcome them and kill them.

And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is mystically called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. And those from the peoples and tribes and tons and nations will look at their dead bodies for three days and a half and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb.

- [3 : 56] And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry. And they will send gifts to one another because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. And after the three days and a half, the breath of life from God came into them.
- And they stood on their feet and great fear fell upon those who were beholding them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, come up here. And they went up into heaven in the cloud and their enemies beheld them.
- And in that hour there was a great earthquake and a tenth of the city fell. And seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake. And the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe is past.
- Behold, the third woe is coming. And the seventh angel sounded and there arose loud voices in heaven saying, The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ and he will reign forever and ever.
- And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worship God saying, We give thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign.
- [5 : 02] And the nations were enraged and your wrath came. And the time came for the dead to be judged and the time to give their reward to your bond servants, the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth.
- This is the word of God. You may be seated. I warned you.
- I warned you. Now, why? Why is the Hallelujah Chorus experienced as a woe?
- Did you notice that? In verse 15, John says that loud voices from heaven sing, The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.
- Words George Friedrich Kendall has immortalized in the music of his Messiah. But in the 11th chapter of the revelation of Jesus Christ, the good news of the Hallelujah Chorus is experienced by many people in the world as a woe.
- [6 : 18] Why? Why? Here's the plan this morning. I will first remind us of the context of this text.
- It's very important that we remember where we are in the unfolding drama. Then we're going to go back and simply walk through this text one key phrase at a time.
- And it's going to be a very demanding exercise. But it will be worth our trouble. Trust me. And then I'm going to suggest the implications for us as disciples of Jesus in this part of the world, which he claims as his own.
- Context. Walk through the text. And then implications. Okay? Here we go. The context.
- Revelation 11 is the concluding scene of the second act of this five-act drama that is the last book of the Bible.
- [7 : 30] The second act begins way back at chapter 4, verse 1, and it begins with the verb open. Revelation 4, 1, John says, I saw a door into heaven open.
- He looks through the open door and he sees a throne. And he sees that someone sitting on the throne who was and is and is to come.
- He sees that in the right hand of the one who is sitting on the throne there is this scroll. It's sealed with seven seals. It is the scroll of history. John says that he hears who can open the scroll thundered throughout the universe.
- And then he hears one of the elders say, Look, the lion has overcome and he can open the scroll. John then turns, expecting to see a lion, but to his surprise sees a lamb.

The lamb who is slain. The lamb who is crucified. The lion overcomes by becoming a lamb, a sacrificial lamb. The lamb, Jesus Christ, is worthy to open up the scroll of history because he laid his life down in sacrificial love for the world.

[8 : 50] Then John sees the lamb open the seven seals. Revelation chapter 6. And as we emphasized last week, in each of these seals, someone prays.

When the lamb gets to the seventh seal, Revelation 8.1, there is silence in heaven. Why? In order to gather up all the prayers of the people of God throughout history.

Why? Because the breaking of the seven seals reveals one of the secrets of heaven. Secrets of history. In the words of Thomas Torrance, history moves at the impulse of prayer.

Then, out of the breaking of this seventh seal, John sees seven angels step forward.

Revelation 8.2. The seven angels are given seven trumpets. The angels then blow the trumpets. The first four in rapid succession, the fifth and sixth taking a bit longer.

[9 : 53] The fifth trumpet introduces three woes. So that trumpet five is the first woe. Trumpet six is the second woe.

And trumpet seven, the hallelujah chorus, is the third woe. Why? Why? Why would the hallelujah chorus be experienced as a woe?

Why? The seven trumpets are formatted in the same way that the seven seals are in the drama. Seals, one, two, three, four, rapid succession, then five, six, seven, and apparently coming to the end of the drama with this silence.

Revelation 11.17.

I hope you noticed that when we read. 11.17. Who is and was. Know is to come. Up to this point in the drama, the Almighty is always referred to as who was and is and is to come.

[11 : 07] Here, there is no is to come because presumably we are now at the end. But we are not at the end. John is going to see more, including seven peals of thunder, which he's told to close because no one is ever supposed to know the content of them.

And then seven bowls. Now, remember that the question to ask when reading the revelation of Jesus Christ is not what happens next.

That's not the question. The question is what does John see next? Because what John sees next may not actually happen next.

So, when we read the seven seals and the seven trumpets and the seven bowls, we are not reading historical events happening in sequence.

John is not suggesting there are 21 historical events in sequence here.

[12 : 15] Rather, John, or actually Jesus through John, is going around the same historical dynamics three times from three different perspectives.

The seven seals are from the perspective of the church experiencing opposition and persecution. The seven trumpets are from the perspective of the world that experiences God's actions in the world as judgment.

And the seven bowls are from the seven. And the seven bulls are from the perspective of heaven working out justice when the call of the trumpets is not being heeded. All of that going on all the time throughout history.

All of it going on since the first time that Jesus came until the time he comes with his new heaven and new earth. Now, in both the opening of the seals and the sounding of the trumpets, there is an interlude.

An interlude between the sixth and seventh parts of the sequence. So, you have one, two, three, four, five, six. Interlude, seven.

[13 : 24] Seals. One, two, three, four, five, six. Interlude, seven. Trumpets, one, two, three, four, five, six. Interlude, seven. Now, why bother with this detail?

Because each interlude is answering a question that arises from the unfolding of the six either seals or trumpets.

The seal interlude is answering the question, who can stand? As the kinds of things depicted in the six seals take place in the world, who can stand?

Answer, those sealed by the blood of the Lamb. Revelation chapter seven. The trumpet interlude answers the question, what is the church supposed to do in the world?

As all of this, as all of this depicted in the seals and the trumpets takes place, what is the church, sealed by the Lamb, supposed to do? The sixth trumpet, before the interlude, the sixth trumpet ends, Revelation 9.21, they did not repent.

[14 : 36] John is telling us that all that is depicted in the sounding of trumpets one through six has the goal of bringing people to repentance.

Repent. It simply means turn around. John is saying that God's actions in the world have the goal of bringing people to the place where they will turn around and embrace the slain Lamb as the Savior and Lord.

Now, what is the church supposed to be doing as all of this is taking place? As the church continues to pray, as some people turn and as some people do not turn, what is the church supposed to be doing?

Trumpet interlude, Revelation 11, witness. Witness to grace. Witness to grace in such a way that more and more people turn around.

The eleventh chapter of the drama is all about the church bearing witness to grace in the world. Richard Baucom, who is probably the world's leading Revelation scholar, suggests that what we have in Revelation 11 is a parable.

[15 : 55] A parable about the church in the world. This is how he puts it. The people of God have been redeemed from all the nations in order to bear prophetic witness to all the nations.

Thus, this is the story. This is the story. Sorry. This is what the story of the two witnesses symbolically dramatizes. Two individuals here represent the church in its faithful witness in the world.

Their story must be taken neither literally nor even as an allegory, as though the sequence of events in the story were supposed to correspond to a sequence of events in the church's history.

The story is more like a parable, which dramatizes the nature and results of the church's witness. Now, how do we know that Revelation 11 is about the church?

Did you pick that up as we read it? How do we know that's about the church? Verse 4. Lampstands. The two witnesses are called the two lampstands.

[16 : 57] Now, where have we met the imagery of lampstands before? In chapters 1 to 3, where Jesus depicts the seven churches of Asia Minor as lampstands.

In chapter 11, we have a parable of the two witnesses, the two lampstands, who represent the whole of the church of Jesus Christ bearing witness to Jesus Christ in the world.

A witness of grace calling people to turn around. A witness that says, we're going in the wrong direction and we've all got to turn around.

Okay. So now let's go back and walk through the parable. If you have not already done so, may I invite you to take this printed text in hand.

You'll need it in your hands. To follow me as I go through phrase by phrase. And here I'm working with material that I develop more deeply in my book on the last book of the Bible.

[17 : 55] So, okay, here we go. Here we go. This is going to require some work. But we're going to make some astounding discoveries about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ in this city.

Don't worry about getting everything. Okay? Don't worry about that. Just receive as much as you can as we go along. All right? Turn to your neighbor and say, here we go.

Okay. Verse 1. For the first time in the drama, John is now invited to partake in the action. He's told to measure the temple, the altar, and the people within it.

Now, the word temple here cannot refer to a literal brick and mortar structure in Jerusalem. Why not?

Because it was not there anymore. It was not anywhere anymore. When Jesus put on his apocalypse for John on the island of Patmos, the temple in Jerusalem was not there anymore.

[19 : 05] It had been, tragically, leveled to the ground in 70 A.D. when Rome destroyed Jerusalem. Just as Jesus said would happen in his temple.

Not one stone will be left upon the others. When John was on the island of Patmos, the temple no longer existed.

And John knew it would never again exist, as Jesus said. Which is why, in the vision of the new Jerusalem, in the true holy city in Revelation 21 and 22, John says, I saw in a temple.

The Lord God and the Lamb had become the temple. The whole city is the temple. The whole new creation is the temple. So, John is not being told to measure a literal building. It did not exist.

And never will again. He's being told to measure the new temple of God, which is the people of God. This is a major theme in the New Testament.

[20 : 14] 1 Corinthians 3.16 Do you not know that you are a temple of God, that the Holy Spirit dwells in you? 2 Corinthians 6.16 For we are the temple of the living God, Paul the Jew says.

We are the temple of the living God. Just as God has said, I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God and they will be my people. So, this temple in the text is referring to the people of God, who is the now living temple.

Verse 1 again. Measure. The idea is measure so that it can be protected. Now, here John is working with a scene in the prophet Zechariah.

He works with Zechariah a lot in the Revelation. In Zechariah 2, a man appears with a measuring rod. And he's told to measure the city of Jerusalem, its length and width. And why?

The Lord says, For I will be a wall of fire to her, and I will be the glory in her midst. John is told to measure the temple, to measure the people of God, because God is going to come and dwell in their midst as a wall of fire.

[21 : 26] Verse 2. Leave out the court, which is outside the temple. Do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations. They will tread it underfoot for 42 months.

More on 42 months in a moment. The outer court of the literal temple is the place where the Gentiles could go. The inner court was the place where only the Jewish priests could go.

John is being told that the people of God will find themselves in conflict for 42 months. But God will protect this inner court, this new temple, the new priesthood, bought by the blood of the Lamb.

But the outer court, made up of those who have not yet become part of this new priesthood, will not be protected. It will not be protected because the only hope for it is to be converted.

It must turn around. Verse 2. 42 months. What is this about, huh? Statistic or symbol?

[22 : 32] Symbol. All the numbers in the revelation of Jesus Christ are symbols. 42 months, 1,260 days, based on a 30-day month.

42 months, 1,260 days, is the length of time that Jesus says the nations will trample on the things of God while the witnesses bear witness to him.

42 months, 1,260 days, is three and a half years. Three and a half years is one half of seven, the number of perfection. Now, this number of 42 is found throughout the Bible.

You might know that there were 42 stages in Israel's journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. You might know that Matthew, in his genealogy of Jesus, says there were 42 generations from Abraham to Jesus Christ.

42 months, 1,260 days, three and a half years, is found two times in the book of Daniel. It's found in the form of time, times, and a half a time.

[23 : 37] One, two and a half. One year, two years and a half of you, year three and a half years. Now, 42 is clearly a symbol.

And it appears it's the symbol for the span of time that the new temple, the people of God, bear witness in the world under pressure from the world to compromise their allegiance to Jesus Christ.

42 months, 1,260 days, three and a half years, is the period of time from the day that Jesus Christ first instituted his new temple with his blood until that day when he brings the new city, which is the new temple.

Okay. Verse 2 again. Two witnesses prophesy for 1,260 days. Prophesy means speak forth the word of God.

And John says that they are clothed in sackcloth. This is one of the keys to this whole text. They're clothed in sackcloth. Sackcloth is the sign of a prophet.

[24 : 47] And more importantly, sackcloth is the sign of repentance. These witnesses are wearing sackcloth because their message calls for repentance and because the witnesses themselves are repenting.

They themselves are turning around. Verse 4. John refers to these two witnesses as the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.

Here he again is working with a text from Zechariah. In Zechariah 4, the prophet sees a lampstand with seven lamps on it and he sees two olive trees on either side of the lampstand.

It turns out these two olive trees are the so-called anointed ones who turn out to be Zerubbabel the king and Joshua the high priest.

And it is these two, Zerubbabel and Joshua, it is to these two that God speaks this wonderful word, not by power nor by might, but by my spirit, says the Lord. Okay, keep going.

[25 : 56] This is going to mount somewhere. Verse 4, lampstands. As we already noted in chapters 1 to 3 of the Revelation, Jesus uses the image of lampstands to refer to his church.

In John's mind, steeped as it is in scripture, the two lampstands refer to the church serving as light in the world.

Why the number two? Why two? Possibly because of the seven churches Jesus speaks to in Revelation 1 to 3, only two remain faithful witnesses.

Five of the other churches did not do well as witnesses. Ephesus lost its first love. Pergamum and Thyatira tolerated the spirit of compromise.

Sardis was wealthy and famous, self-absorbed and therefore dead. Laodicea was lukewarm. Only two of the seven churches had the oil of the lamp burning in them.

[27 : 09] But more to the point, the number two is used because of the biblical principle that a testimony of two is needed. At minimum, you need two witnesses to validate something.

Which is why Paul exhorts Timothy, do not receive an accusation against an elder except by two or three witnesses. Boy, that would help in the gossip mills, wouldn't it?

Don't listen to any accusation unless it's confirmed by two or three other people. And then if it's an accusation, pray for the person. The image of the two lampstands, the two olive trees, the two witnesses, is a picture of the church full of the olive oil of the Holy Spirit burning brightly with the fire of God.

Okay, keep going. Verse 5. If anyone desires to hurt them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies. Yikes. This recalls the experience of Elijah, who on two different occasions is confronted by 50 soldiers and calls down fire on them and the soldiers are consumed.

Verse 6 again. These have the power to shut up the sky in order that rain may not fall. This too recalls another experience of the prophet Elijah when he prayed and for three and a half years there was no rain.

[28 : 31] Verse 6. They have the power over the waters to turn them into blood and to smite the earth with every plague. Yikes again. This recalls the experience of Moses, who with Aaron's rod could turn the Nile into blood and could call, just speaking, call forth the plagues against the idols of Egypt.

Now John is saying, I think, John is saying that God will do, through the witnesses' lampstands, i.e. the church, God will do what God did through Moses and Elijah and Zerubbabel and Joshua and John the Baptist.

God will vindicate his message and overcome opposition. Verse 7. The beast. And when they finish their testimony, the beast that comes out of the abyss will make war with them and overcome them and kill them.

John is going to tell us more about the beast later in Revelation 13. He's doing here what he often does. He introduces the character early, without much comment, so that we can anticipate later Revelation.

He introduces this beast, I think, to tell us again that the opposition to the witness to Jesus Christ is really not human. Fundamentally, it's these anti-Christ forces behind the scenes.

[29 : 47] The beast overcomes and kills the witnesses, as we know throughout church history. Why? Because this beast, whatever this beast is, does not like the one to whom the witnesses are bearing witness.

The witnesses and persecution take place, John says in verse 8, in the great city, which is mystically called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

Now, what is this about? In the scriptures, Sodom is human cities at their most immoral and corrupt.

Egypt is human cities at their most oppressive and resistant. Is John suggesting here that Jerusalem has somehow become like Sodom and Egypt?

In the rest of the Revelation, the phrase, the great city, will refer to Babylon, which at that time was Roman, which in other parts of history refers to other cities.

[30 : 47] Again, again, remember that when John writes, Jerusalem is no more. It's been leveled. So, John is not saying that this witness is born in a literal Jerusalem.

The great city is any and every city that resists the inbreaking of the kingdom of God and persecutes Jesus' followers. New Testament scholar Gerhard Krotel puts it so well.

He says, The great city is every city that embodies self-sufficiency in place of dependence on the Creator, achievement in place of repentance, oppression in place of faith, the beast in place of the lamb, and murder in place of the witness to God.

I don't know any city like that. Verse 11. And after three and a half days, the breath of God came into them, and they stood on their feet.

The words here are directly from the prophet Ezekiel, chapter 37, in the famous vision of the Valley of Dry Bones. God took Ezekiel out into a valley.

[31 : 56] It's filled with dry bones. He tells Ezekiel to speak the prophetic word over the dry bones, and they come to life as a great army. John is saying that although this beast might overcome the witnesses, the Spirit of God brings them back to life again.

The point being that the Church of Jesus Christ cannot be destroyed. Whenever the Church appears to be wiped out, it rises again.

Think China. Think Vietnam. One day we will see it in North Korea. And one day we're going to see it in the West again.

The specific individuals of the churches might not be brought back to this earth. But the Church itself will rise up again and again. Verse 13.

Now this is the key verse. Listen carefully. Now it's easy to just read right over that verse and miss what wonderful news has just been declared.

[33 : 23] What wonderful news? One-tenth killed? Seven thousand killed? This is wonderful news. One-tenth, seven thousand.

Statistic or symbol? Symbol. All the numbers in the Revelation of Jesus Christ are symbols. One-tenth, seven thousand.

Symbol of what? Symbol of grace. Of grace. Grace. Grace. Follow me.

One-tenth, seven thousand. It sounds awful. And it is. But John here is doing gospel math. You see, the prophet Isaiah speaks of God saving one-tenth, but nine-tenths fall.

The prophet Amos speaks of a city of one thousand with only one hundred left, of a city of a hundred with only ten left. One-tenth saved, nine-tenths fall.

[34 : 27] John says, nine-tenths are saved, only one-tenth fall. Revelation 11, 13. Seven thousand died. That's awful. But in 1 Kings 19, Elijah bemoans the fact that only seven thousand are left.

John says seven thousand died, but 63,000 are left. Again, we're not dealing with statistics here. We're dealing with symbols. Symbols of gospel math.

Of grace. Not one-tenth saved, nine-tenths lost, but nine-tenths saved. Not seven thousand saved, and the rest die, but 63,000 saved.

And this mathematical reversal is all due to the witness of the witnesses. The text says the witnesses get killed, but because of the way they die, still trusting the Lamb, nine-tenths of the great city is redeemed.

They give glory to the God of heaven, says John. That's a way of saying that they turned around, and they embraced the Lamb as their Savior and Lord. The faithful witness brings about the conversion of all but seven thousand.

[35 : 44] You following me, Eric? It's grace. Okay. We've done the hard work. Now, if you give me about eight more minutes, what are the implications for us as disciples of Jesus Christ in our time in this place, on this corner?

Witness. Witness. Witness is the language of the courtroom. Witness suggests that someone's on trial in the city. Who?

Who is on trial? Not the church. Not us. If we were on trial, the text would call us defendants.

Witnesses are called to give evidence to somebody else's claim. Witnesses are called to come in and witness to someone else's claim. Who is on trial in the great city?

Jesus Christ. Who was crucified in the great city. Jesus Christ is on trial. Why? Why is he on trial? He's on trial for claiming to have brought into the world a kingdom which slowly transforms and displaces all other kingdoms.

[37 : 08] Jesus Christ is on trial for claiming that he can come into a broken world and make people whole. Jesus Christ is on trial for claiming that he can come and free people from the powers of sin and evil and death.

Jesus Christ is on trial because he claims to be the center of life. Jesus Christ is on trial because he upsets the status quo. And in his trial in the great city, he brings in witnesses, evidence that is right.

The issue is Jesus. Not the church. Not you. Not me. We are not the issue in the world today.

Jesus is. He's the one who's made these claims. He's the issue. He always makes himself the issue. And it is our great privilege to witness to his claims.

Now, John tells us how we do this. He says the key to our witness is going to be what we wear. What we wear.

[38 : 31] Sackloth. Clothed in sackloth. Not literally so. Sackloth is a prophetic sign. It's a sign that the church's witness is a prophetic witness.

A thus says the Lord kind of witness. A declaration of truth in the midst of deceit and confusion kind of witness. And sackloth is a sign of repentance.

It's a sign of turning around. Jesus is saying, get this, Jesus is saying that we bear witness to him in the world clothed in repentance.

Why? Because truth and grace always call us to repent. How can I follow a new master unless I turn around and quit following the old master?

How can I live by the values of a new kingdom unless I turn around and resist the values of the old kingdom? I have to turn around again and again and again at ever deeper levels.

[39 : 36] We wear repentance because we ourselves are repenting people. We are turning around people. The text is saying that we bear witness to Jesus by constantly turning into his counterculture kingdom which by necessity requires that we're constantly turning away from the idolatry of the age.

Which means that this witness is not a judgmental witness. Oh, judgment might be the result for those who won't turn but the spirit of a prophetic witness is not a judgmental spirit.

It's a broken spirit. We bear witness to the Lamb from a place of brokenness over our own idolatry. And, says the text, we do this clothed in the power of the Holy Spirit.

That's the point of the reference to Elijah and to Moses. Not that the church like they can call down fire on people or can make the rain stop. Well, that would get a lot of attention. The point is that we like they will be clothed with power from on high as Jesus promised the first disciples.

In Revelation 11, Jesus through John is telling us that as we bear witness in the city, we will do so with the same spirit and power that was given to Elijah and Moses and Zerubbabel and Joshua and John the Baptist.

[41 : 11] Power that validates the message and power that overcomes the resistance so that others can join us in this turning around. And, according to the text, we find ourselves in trouble.

How can it be otherwise? We're talking about a king who upsets the status quo. Some will joyfully respond and others will not.

John says in verse 10 that the great city killed the witnesses because the two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. Why would a prophetic witness torment anyone?

Why would bearing witness to Jesus Christ torment anyone? Because the good news confronts idols. If Jesus is Lord, then you are not and I am not.

When Jesus enters the picture, there is healing and restoration big time. But he exposes the idols, all the false gods, and we either turn around or his exposing of the idols will torment our conscience and the torment is grace.

[42 : 38] Don't worry when someone walks away from your witness tormented. That's grace. The tormenting will eventually lead to turning around.

Somewhere along the line, we as a church in our time have to accept the fact that the gospel is a great scandal.

The gospel is wonderfully good news, but it is a scandal because Jesus Christ questions the status quo in our lives and in the life of the world.

I'm learning from Soren Kierkegaard, the great Danish philosopher theologian. He argues that authentic faith really doesn't happen until we embrace the fact that Jesus is a scandal to the world.

Which is why the Hallelujah Chorus is experienced in Revelation 11 as a woe. The Hallelujah Chorus sings the scandal.

[43 : 50] I love to go to public presentations of Handel's Messiah. I love it because the gospel is so powerfully proclaimed. At the end, as the orchestra starts to play the introductory notes to the Hallelujah Chorus and as the choir starts to sing, at the end people begin to stand.

It's moving to witness. People begin to stand on their feet before revolutionized words. The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and others Christ.

Boy, do they hear the words? Do they and we understand how revolutionary those words are?

the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ. If they and we hear those words, we cannot simply stand there.

We have to turn around and renounce all the idols of our time and follow Jesus with reckless abandon into his kingdom.

[45 : 15] For he and he alone shall reign forever and ever. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.