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On September 22 or thereabouts Kim Jong Un called president Trump a dotard. I had to google what that means, and then I laughed about it for a good 3 days. Chock one up to Kim.

A dotard is a deranged slobbering old fool who is senile and no longer has control of any of his functions. It wasn't 3 hours until someone put up a picture of Mr. Trump with his wife and his young son and on Barron's T shirt are the words and the arrow "*I'm with the Dotard*".

It still makes me laugh. But on a more serious note, what if the onlooking world is seeing the church, the body of Christ, and what they're seeing is in fact, a dotard? A body no longer in control of its functions. Dysfunctional. Sad. No value to anyone. The church is a Dotard. Is that possible? Listen on.

This is now our third attack at this most important section of scripture.

If you missed part 1 or 2 I'd encourage you to go to our web pages and read through those. I have titled this; Peter's Survival Briefing for the Church. And that is truly what this short section is.

Within these 4 verses, this economy of words, Peter describes how the church is to survive through all the ages, and pinch yourselves, here we are. 2000 years later, a number which it would be fun to ask Peter if he ever dreamed of, the church is alive and intact.

Peter says, the end of all things is at hand, and that statement has been true for the church of God dwelling as enemy combatants in a hostile environment that is under the control of Satan and his hosts of demons for 2000 years.

The church in one form or another has always been the target of Satan. A good student of the church, the body of Christ throughout the ages could outline the many different strategies of our great enemy over 2000 years.

We could summarize that progression quickly by outlining the seven letters to the churches in the book of Revelation, chapters 2 and 3.

By the way, while I was preparing these things for this morning, I discovered that if you go to our web pages to do that and clicked on the link in the Rotator about the Letters to Seven Churches on the front page, it didn't take you to that section. I fixed that and I also reviewed that when I was building the site, I only got to chapter 12 in Revelation, so I plan to finish loading the rest of the book of Revelation.

Revelation 2 and 3 besides being real letters to real churches, many believe are also a veiled summary of the ages of church history until Jesus returns and removes His bride, the church, out of this world. That means we are in there somewhere.

So, bear with me for a couple of minutes of review, because I want to set the stage for Peter's survival guide within the context of what Satan has thrown at the church for 2000 years. Seven churches, seven ages, including the one we are in.

Ephesus, the first century church. It was founded by Paul, and enjoyed time with both Timothy, and the apostle John. Rock solid doctrinally, and it modeled correct church polity with a plurality of elders that we see in Acts 20.

But it got so busy being the model church with model doctrine that it forgot about Jesus. They fell out of love with the saviour. Instead of a love relationship with Jesus, it became the organized religion that we

love to hate.

Then Smyrna, the church in direct conflict and pressure from Satan. The persecuted church. Satan solved the organized religion problem. Persecution either drives you to cling to the Saviour or it drives you out.

It took Satan a few centuries to figure that out. He couldn't crush the church of the Sovereign Lord, and the pressure just made it Red Hot in it's love for Him. So Satan took another tack. A different strategy.

Make the church sick by marrying it to the world. Instead of outward pressure, inner cancer. It's a fascinating study.

And I hate to aggravate our beloved brother Kirk because he's becoming very precious to me, but the next three churches represent the ages of the papal church. It progresses in it's cancer and spiritual whoredom beginning in Pergammum, full blown in Thyatira, and fully dead in Sardis. Jesus says the works of that church are incomplete. They fall short of salvation.

But if you read those letters, you'll see that in Sardis, there is a call from Jesus, for the church to "Wake Up!" And we've been celebrating the 500 year anniversary of Luther nailing his 95 theses onto the door of the church at Wittenburg on October 31, 1517.

It jolted the church awake, and the reformation began around what we call today the 5 Sola's. Sola is latin for Only. Scripture alone, leads to faith alone, in Christ alone, by grace alone, for the glory of God, alone.

Those 5 principals caused a great division and delivered the church ultimately to the next age which is Philadelphia. The reformation brought us back to the scriptures written in the language of the common man.

The scripture caused a time that we refer to as Puritanism and the pure church resulted in a great missionary movement beginning in the late 1700's. The gospel sent to the nations. Christ calling out a people for Himself from every nation and ethnic group on the globe. We're still

working at that.

Last Friday at our little pastors retreat in Bishop, one of the folks who shared briefly with us were a couple who for 30 years worked with Wycliffe in Africa to translate the Bible into the language of an ethnic group there who had never had the Bible before.

The man was a computer specialist and he tells of designing symbols for the computer that would accurately bring the meaning of the texts of the Bible to this group of people in their distinct language. He literally had to design the fonts for the computer to publish the translation in their unique language.

Jesus told the Philadelphia church that He would give them open doors to accomplish the task. That means He in some measure, restrained Satan from interfering with the church while it calls out the nations.

It doesn't mean it was easy. There is always persecution, always push back, always battle with the world, but to the church that honors and obeys this book, a way is opened up in the midst of the trouble to keep moving forward.

But sadly, we have the final chapter in this march through the churches ages. The church at Laodicea. The final onslaught of Satan. And this is the church of easy believism. The church that is indistinct. The church that says you don't have to come out from among this world to be a christian.

You can keep the world, and Jesus will still save you. You can look just like the world and do everything the world says is OK to do, and Jesus will give you fire insurance even though there is no change in your life.

The church is just as cool as the world. The church is just as worldly, as the world. The church sounds . . . just like the world. All the distinctions are gone. Jesus is cool, man. Jesus is a rock star. *Get you some of that.*

There's nothing new under the sun. It was marriage to the world that

caused the cancer 1500 years ago, and it's a marriage to the world today that is making the church into something that Jesus will spew out of His mouth when He comes to call His real church home.

OK, full circle back to Peter. I said all of that to set the stage. The church throughout the ages has been and will always be the target of Satan's fury. In one form or another, Satan's job number 1 is to interfere with and cause spiritual death if possible to the people of God.

And Peter, in an economy of words, just 4 verses, has outlined for the church in every stage, in every age, how to survive the onslaught. And it's just as true, just as effective today, just as necessary, just as vital, as it was when he wrote it during the first century. Probably about 56 AD when Nero brought the first persecution.

And very briefly, as a review, we see a triad of relationships here that will keep the church safe from anything Satan can blast at it.

In vs. 7, the stage is set. The end of all things is at hand. That's code for *the church is under the onslaught of Satan in this age*. The next thing on God's schedule is the removal of the church which begins the seven year period of Jewish history that remains, the end of which see's the Messiah returning, deposing Satan and locking him up, and a Kingdom on this earth with Jesus reigning.

And then that word; Therefore. Since we're under attack, here's your survival strategy. First in vs. 7, as a review, a vertical connection with the Saviour. Prayer and the word.

therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.

There's only one way to achieve sound judgement and sober spirit. And that is to drink in the Word of God. The only strategy for christians to survive Satan is this vertical connection. We cling to a one on one love relationship with Jesus by spending time, real time, in this book, getting to know Him. Prayer is the natural result of that.

He speaks to us in this book. We pour out our hearts to Him in prayer. Spiritual breathing.

That vertical connection is real. It's personal. It's not unlike the picture He gives to us in christian marriage. A lasting friendship that is a daily walk, a daily relationship. Not always fun. Not always exciting. We have those times too, but the relationship is a commitment to a constant friendship through everything. A commitment to spend all of our days, together.

That is a picture of that vertical relationship with Jesus. So how are you doing? How is your marriage with the Saviour? Do you know Him, intimately? Are you spending time with Him? Him speaking to you in His book. You speaking to Him in prayer. Every day? What marriage survives if that relationship isn't a daily, hourly thing? A vertical relationship with Jesus.

Then in vs. 8 and 9, the relationships go horizontal. Christian to christian. We love each other. We tolerate each other. We forgive each other. We meet each others needs, uncomplainingly.

8 Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Be hospitable to one another without complaint.

And finally, verses 10 and 11 are where we want to spend our time this morning.

We introduced this third leg of the triad three weeks ago. We beg your forgiveness for time well spent, away for two weeks.

In vs. 10 we see a phenomenon that is unique to the church. Actually all of these things are unique to real christianity, because the basis is the vertical one on one relationship of true believers to Jesus. No other religion has that.

That love relationship for our Saviour, and the love that He pours out in our hearts for each other is above and beyond anything this world

experiences.

Science has uncovered for us that God has designed within childbirth, a chemical reaction in the brain of almost every mother that causes them to love that babe in their arms. Dads get some too. We look at that little life and it becomes the most precious thing in the world to us. We would move heaven and earth to protect our babies. Even when they're grown.

On a different level, when our hearts are connected with the Lord Jesus Christ, vertically, He pours out His love in our hearts and it overflows to other christians. That horizontal connection, christian to christian is the overflow of the vertical connection.

Churches where everybody is fighting and hating each other, the root of that problem is right here. They aren't fed this book. They never grow up. And you end up with a whole bunch of baby christians with a faulty vertical connection to the Saviour, a stunted growth, and the horizontal connection with each other just breaks down.

Everything is based in that vertical relationship. That's why I labor to do my best to feed you this book. To give you a foundation where you can go, on your own, and begin to read this book and the puzzle pieces are starting to fit together.

OK, so a vertical love connection with the Saviour. His word in, Prayer out, just like breathing. And as a result of that, a horizontal love connection with His people. The church.

And the third connection in this triad is totally unique. Jesus wants to use you as a pipeline of blessing to others. He pours out His blessings on the church, and indeed, even on the nations by using you as a pipeline to them.

This is the idea of spiritual gifts. And we began that discussion three weeks ago, and I want to expand on these two verses, 10 and 11, this morning by looking at Paul's teaching on this very subject.

Peter approaches this as if these folks already have the necessary background to receive and understand what he's saying.

*10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good **stewards of the manifold grace of God**. 11 Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

Spiritual gifts are a stewardship. They are a responsibility. Of every christian! Spiritual gifts are wealth and riches that belong to someone else, the Lord Jesus, and He has given them to you, not to squander on yourself, but to distribute to others.

The paymaster in a large corporation has a checkbook and all the wealth of that corporation at his finger tips. But if he writes the check to himself and lets the rest of the corporation go hungry, what happens?

That's called embezzlement. Or what happens if he is lazy and just doesn't bother writing the paychecks. Too much trouble to do that. He'd rather play golf.

Pam had that happen to her last week. Her paycheck was like \$220 for a couple of weeks work. No bueno. And the people who have bills to pay are about to form a riot. And guess what, a 3 star general gets on an airplane, and I'm thinking whoever the steward was that was supposed to write those checks is going to have a bad couple of days getting things fixed.

Peter says, these gifts that God has given you to distribute to others are a stewardship. See it there in vs. *10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good **stewards of the manifold grace of God**.*

He also makes it patently clear that every christian, every real believer has received this stewardship. Nobody is off the hook. Every christian

is a steward to distribute in some way or other, the manifold graces of God, to other christians. Other believers. And in some cases, to unbelievers.

We build up each other. We share the good news with non believers.

In vs. 11 Peter just breaks the gifts down to 2 categories. Speaking gifts. What I'm doing. What you will be doing as you share Jesus with your neighbors. Any time your mouth is speaking the truths of this book in every possible kind of circumstance.

11 Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God;

We do that as though God of very God were speaking through us. We're just the pipeline. Just the voice that He is using to communicate His truths to others. His book. His voice. Stray from His book, it's only your voice.

Obviously, you can't speak the very utterances of God if you're ignorant of His book. This stewardship is based in the necessity of that vertical relationship. An understanding of this book based in depth of time spent with Him. You'll be like the person who wrote Pam's paycheck if your stewardship isn't based in real time spent here.

By the way. I'm available. Even though I work away from home, our church website has my email address displayed prominently. And if you're reading and trying to understand this book and you're just hopelessly puzzled by what you're reading. It's not making sense. Email me. Let me have a crack at helping.

And a second category of this stewardship. Serving. See it there in vs. 11 *whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever*

It isn't you who speaks. It's Jesus, through you. It isn't you who serves. It's Jesus serving others, through you. He provides the power that

causes the result that glorifies Him.

Every spiritual gift accomplishes things that are humanly impossible. God provides the increase. He causes His work to be accomplished, by using us. We become the pipeline He uses to accomplish things in others and for others that are beyond what we could do.

That stewardship is an awesome responsibility. We don't want some 3 star general red hot mad coming to straighten out our mess, and we don't want to ignore our gifts which are a stewardship and have the Saviour come and straighten out our mess.

Your spiritual gifting is an awesome responsibility. Christ's riches, given to you, to give to others. Other Christians depend on . . . YOU.

So, very briefly, in the time we have left, I want to take you quickly through Paul's teaching to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 12:4 - 31. I'm not even going to expand on it, this morning. It's very simply written.

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6 There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. 7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit;

OK, I lied. I have to stop there just for a moment. Those 2 guys who visited us last week and one of them brought us the word, are the perfect definition of that verse. The guy who spoke, Keith Rohrer, has the gift of knowledge and he teaches the Bible with great clarity and ease.

But the other guy, Charlie, has the gift of wisdom. He takes the word that Keith teaches, and he goes out, one on one in the congregation, whoever needs him, and he helps folks apply the knowledge Keith is teaching. He counsels with excellent wisdom, using God's word.

vs9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to

another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

12 For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

14 For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. 19 If they were all one member, where would the body be? 20 But now there are many members, but one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; 23 and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, 24 whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, 25 so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

27 Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. 29 All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All

are not workers of miracles, are they? 30 All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? 31 But earnestly desire the greater gifts.

And I show you a still more excellent way.

We're mostly out of time. Hopefully the Spirit will direct us into a teaching of this passage and also Romans 12 in some depth.

But before we close, I bring you full circle back to my introduction.

Every believer, every true christian has a compliment of gifts. Jesus combines some of these gifts in every believer. Personally, I believe no 2 believers have identical compliments of gifts. We're like spiritual snowflakes. Each one is different, how Jesus takes the gifts and combines them to make each christian special in His body.

What happens when the body of Christ doesn't pay any attention to the stewardship that Christ has given to each believer?

Look around you in this country. The church, the body of Christ is dysfunctional to some degree. The church becomes a dotard if we ignore our spiritual gifts and don't fulfil our stewardship of them.

I have to add one final footnote. Historically, after the first generation, the first century church, when the canon of scripture was complete and the church was established in the world, it had it's doctrines written by the apostles of the church once for all time, the miracle gifts ceased.

Tongues and prophecies of the future and apostles and others who had gifts of healing and other miracles that were for the establishment of the church, those things ceased. The church fathers bear witness that the miraculous category of gifts, ceased. Vanished. We could say a lot more about that, but I'll use some restraint.

What we need to take away is that the church is the body of Christ; All of it's citizens, it's true believers have spiritual gifts that they have a stewardship to distribute. And if that isn't happening, the body of Christ appears to the world . . . as a Dotard.

I encourage each of you to consider your calling, your walk with the Saviour, your love for each other, and your stewardship of your giftedness given to you by the Saviour.

Pray about that. Ask the Lord to reveal to you what your gift to the church is, and how He would have you distribute it for His glory and the vitality of His body, the church.

In Tonopah Nevada, my fervent prayer is for a little group of christians that are pulling with all 8 cylinders. A picture to the onlooking world of the Saviour that is alive, well, healthy, strong, functioning, and not only that, but beautiful. Jesus is beautiful. His body should display that beauty.

Jesus draws others to Himself when they see Him, they see His love and power in His body, the church. That's our calling. That's our responsibility. Look out Satan. The body of Christ is alive and well in Tonopah Nevada.