

Sunday theme – **In times of trial.**

1. I'm sure most of us, if not all, can identify with times in our lives of real difficulty, what seems like one bad thing following another, with no relief or end in sight.

1a. Did you feel this was a run of bad luck, or coincidence, or the attacks of Satan?

1b. How do you feel about talking of spiritual attacks or the work of Satan?

Read Revelation 3: 7-13

2. Verse 7. John writes the words he has heard from Christ confirming he is 'the key of David' (the Messiah in David's [promised] line and what 'Israel' should have recognised), and he alone holds the keys to the Kingdom.

2a. Why do you think Jesus starts his message to the church in this way?

3. Verse 8. Though the church has little remaining strength resulting from the ongoing struggles with the opposition (Satan), yet they have 'kept my word and have not denied my name'. The ultimate prize is ready and open to them.

3a. What memories, if any, do you have of how difficult it was, in times of trouble, to remember Christ's promises?

3b. Where did you find help and support at such times?

4. Verse 9. Applying this verse to life today:-

4a. Is there a sense that 'claim to be Jews but are not' is a warning that those close to us – perhaps colleagues, friends even family – might cause us the most difficulty in living out and acknowledging our faith? Would you agree?

4b. Do you agree that it is more difficult to witness to those closest to us? If so, why is this?

Read Ephesians 6: 10-18

5. Note first that both Paul in this passage and John in our Revelation passage expect their readers to be familiar with the devil's schemes. No question that Satan exists and is working to disrupt and bring discord. Note also that the pieces of armour that Paul lists are all only able to be used defensively, the only exception is the sword – the word of God – although also defensive, has potential to be used to attack.

5a. Verse 13 cautions that we need to be prepared, fully prepared, in order to withstand the devil's schemes. Give some thought to the properties and qualities of the pieces of armour needed.

5b. Which piece of armour is the most needed, or is this the wrong question?

(Bible used = NIV 2011 translation)