I fell at his feet as dead

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[0:00] We turn now to Revelation chapter 1 and to verses 17 and 18. Revelation 1, 17 and 18. Where John says, When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.

And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not, I am the first and the last. I am he that liveth and was dead.
And behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And have the keys of hell and of death. Revelation 1 and verses 17 and 18.
Now we know that a person who is a gifted writer and suitably qualified in other ways may be commissioned to write a book or a booklet or even a pamphlet to commemorate some important event or some very important person.
Such a thing happened last spring when a booklet was written to commemorate the centenary of the death of Horatius Bonner who was minister of the Chalmers Memorial Free Church in the Grange in Edinburgh and a well-known hymn writer.
[1:26] And this booklet was commissioned by that same church which is known now as St Catherine's and Argyle Church of Scotland in the Grange, the Kirk Session commissioned a booklet to be written to commemorate that great man's death.

Now the Apostle John was one who was commissioned to write. Not by any committee or session or body or anything but commissioned to write by the living God.
And the place of the commission was the island of Patmos. Patmos, not much more than a lump of rock among the islands of the Duodecanese in the Aegean Sea.
And the occasion for its writing was John's own imprisonment on that lump of rock in the sea because of the testimony he bore to Jesus Christ and his faithfulness to the word of the truth of the gospel.
And the reason for the commission that John received on Patmos was the unveiling of God's plan for his church and the world from all eternity.
[2:49] And the commission itself we find here in the briefest terms in verse 10 write and say. Now what John had to write was what John saw.

And what John saw was in fact a series of remarkable visions which unveiled the sovereignty the sovereign will and the sovereign purpose of God from all eternity again for his church and the world.
And the first of these visions is before us here in verses 12 to 16 in this first chapter a twofold vision.
First, a vision of the church represented by the seven golden lampstands and above all on the other hand a vision of the church's glorious head seen in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.
In other words a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ at the centre and hub of that church which he has purchased with his own blood.
And that is still his position although he is the lamb in the midst of the throne he is the head in the midst of his church and will be until the church here on earth becomes the church in glory.
[4:18] Now we are going to pause at our text in verses 17 and 18 and to notice two things that follow John's vision on the island of Patmos.

And the two things are these we have first of all John's response and reaction to the vision and then we have Christ's response to John's response and reaction.
We can put it this way for clarification. First we have John's response to the vision he had and then we have Christ's response to the John he loved.
These are the two things in verses 17 and 18. So we notice at first John's response to the vision he had and that response is put in very brief form and in this brief statement John says when I saw when I saw him I fell at his feet as one dead as though dead.

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And in that brief statement we have the apostle's reaction to what he saw. And you notice that this statement is in his own words it's not reported second hand it's reported faithfully by himself and recorded by himself.
[5:43] So we have the authentic word the authentic response and reaction of the apostle of Christ to the vision he had. Now what John is saying to us here in these words when I saw him I fell at his feet as though dead.

What he is saying here or maybe saying to us is this that as a result of the vision he had he had a fainting fit. He became prostrate and gave every appearance of having died at Jesus' feet.
And so his response to the vision he had in one word was that of prostration. Prostration. Now I want us to notice now the two things that are revealed here about John's prostration.
And the first is to notice the reasons for his prostration. And then to notice secondly the extent of his prostration.
First the reason. Why did John fall at Jesus' feet as though dead? Was he acting? Was he reacting or overacting?
[7:02] Was he doing something to attract attention? Well of course not. There was no one's attention to attract on that lump of rock in the Aegean Sea for he was there in isolation for the testimony of Jesus Christ and for the word of the gospel and the word of God.

But we know why he fell at Jesus' feet as though dead. First of all because of what he saw. Undoubtedly that's one of the reasons because of what he saw.
He fell down because of the vision itself. The vision had a profound and a traumatic effect upon him which he could not for a moment shake off or forget about.
Well what was it that he saw? What was the vision? He saw the risen and glorified Christ. He saw the eternal Son of God. He saw one like unto the Son of Man and the vision that John saw is given to us in the language of symbolism.
So let us examine just very briefly the symbolism that is brought before us here. First of all John saw Christ's long robe and his golden girdle.
[8:17] And these proclaim Christ's priesthood and his kingship. in other words when John saw Jesus he saw him clothed with office.

He saw him clothed with divine office. He saw him not only as prophet but as priest and king the royal priest and the priestly king.
And he saw also his white hair white like wool. and these and these are probably the this is probably the symbols of maturity and antiquity.
The white hair of one who is marked by maturity all wise made unto us wisdom. And of antiquity the white hair indicates the ancient of days the everlasting father the prince of peace.
And John saw his blazing eyes eyes that see into the hidden depths of every heart eyes that see into the hidden corners of his far flung church so that nothing goes on within the church of Jesus Christ that is unknown to him.
[9:40] Let's remember that. He sees into the hidden depths of his church and into the church's members because he is the church's living head and he has eyes says John in his vision like five eyes that burn and penetrate and expose what they see.

And then John saw his glowing feet like bronze glowing in a furnace and it is with such feet that Jesus walked in the midst of the seven golden lampstands and it is with such feet that Jesus is blazing today a pall for his church in the midst of a hostile world and the church will be forever in the midst of hostility on every side.
But the Lord is in the midst of the church and his feet are glowing feet and one day all his enemies and his church's enemies shall be put under his feet. Principalities and powers shall be put under his feet.
And then John saw rushing waters which represented the powerful voice of the one whom John saw. The voice like crashing waves on the path most shore.
And then he saw seven stars in the right hand of the Lord Jesus. And in Christ's right hand there are the messengers, the angels, the pastors, the preachers, the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.
[11:21] And in their service they are held in the security of his right hand and they speak from the place of authority in his right hand.

and those who belong to Christ and who take upon and who are given the work of teaching the gospel are in the place of security and they have every right to speak with the voice of authority for

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they are in the right hand of the one who is the king and the head of his own church.
And then John saw the double edged sword coming from his mouth. Now the mouth for any person is the place of utterance. And so it was for Christ and this may be a reference to the sword coming from his mouth a reference to the sword of the spirit which is the word of God a double edged sword a sword of comfort and mercy and yet a sword of judgment.
By the breath of his lips says Isaiah shall he slay the wicked. He shall slay his enemies by the words of his mouth says Isaiah and Paul says he shall consume his enemies with the spirit of his mouth.
That's the vision John had and then finally he saw his shining face his face shining like the sun at its meridian glowing not with anger but with pure glory with moral glory and no wonder the angels have to veil their faces.
[13:07] Now whether that is a fair interpretation and understanding of the symbolism or not we are in no doubt as to how John understood it for John says I saw him I saw him the Lord himself and that same John 65 years before this said we beheld his glory glory as of the only begotten of the father full of grace and truth and if John's view of Christ before Patmos was grey and clear then his view of Jesus on Patmos was much more sublime like Daniel in his vision by the river Hittichel Daniel saw one like the son of man clothed in linen and girded with gold and so did

John on Patmos now the point is this that on earth John saw Jesus often and was with Jesus often and spoke with him often but that was with Jesus in his humiliation when his Godhead was veiled in his manhood and wrapped in his perfect humanity veiled in flesh the Godhead see hail the incarnate deity but now 65 years further on and on the island of Patmos John saw that same Jesus the same yet different no longer the man of sorrows no longer one who was crucified who was buried in a borrowed grave he now saw one who was highly exalted whose glory was unveiled no longer hidden in his manhood but unveiled and saw him and saw him as one who is reigning and living and reigning forever and ever so it's this kingly and reigning and glorious
Lord Jesus Christ that was the one who came into John's vision on the island of Patmos John said I saw him and when I saw him I fell at his feet as one dead that was the first reason why John fell at Jesus feet when I saw such moral glory I fell at his feet as though dead that's John's own interpretation and John's own statement now my dear friends the Christian believers Patmos experience is still to come but it won't be while we are still in the body and it won't be until we are out of the body that is at the moment of death and even more fully at our own resurrection when the Lord comes again and then at his coming and at our resurrection we shall see him face to face we shall behold him in all his glory and shall be changed from one degree of glory into another now how do we know this will happen because we know that this is Christ's will for his own people for this is what Jesus prayed while on earth in his high priestly prayer he said father I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me for thou lovest me from the foundation of the world that they may behold my glory my dear friends that's a past most experience for every believing child of God we can't take that in here in this work-a-day world in which we live that we're going to see him face to face and we shall be satisfied when we awake with his likeness we can't take that in so one writer says this till then till he comes again and we see him face to face till then we are preserved from such unseasonable joy which as yet we are not capable of bearing well that's the first reason why he fell because of what he saw and the other reason why he fell we can put this way it's because of how he felt because of how he felt he was afraid because of what he saw and
Jesus knew he was afraid because of what he saw for Jesus said to him fear not fear had overpowered him and fear had prostrated him so you notice this we might think unusual thing that John's glorious vision did not raise him to the seventh heaven it brought him down first of all to the death he didn't walk about singing and leaping and praising God as the healed man outside the temple did but he was brought down and he fell as one dead at Jesus feet why was this well perhaps and I just say perhaps it was because John never saw himself so unworthy or so sinful as when he was placed in the light of Christ awful purity and majesty he had never seen such purity or majesty ever before as was revealed to him there on
[19:24] Patmos and he had never seen such poverty and nakedness as he himself possessed until he went down to the island of Patmos and placed in the centre of Christ's glory and Christ's glory brought up the uncomeliness that was still within him we know how ladies may notice with horror the dust that they missed as soon as the sun shines into the room it then lights up the dust

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that was missed and John saw with horror himself in the radiance of the sun of righteousness and he was afraid and he wasn't the only one to be afraid by such a vision Isaiah had the same experience woe it me for I am undone for my eyes have seen the king and Daniel after his vision by the river Hidikl said this there was no more strength in me and my comeliness was turned into corruption so there you have the second reason why

John fell crossfit not only because of what he saw but because of how he fell I wonder if you ever had the experience of Job when he said I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear but now my eyes have seen thee what then was he raised to the seventh heaven no I abhor myself in dust and ashes oh how we need to be delivered from the prightness that's about us and the flimsiness that's about us and we can use words that express praise and so on where in fact we need to be brought down there is this superficiality and tightness in dealing with the Lord and it seems to me from the examples that I've quoted and others too that the more we see of Jesus the more we realize how much dust and ashes there are within us that's the first thing the reason for his prostration and the second thing is this the extent of his prostration

I fell at his feet as though dead now to be sure there's a place for standing before the Lord to praise and to petition and there's a place for sitting before the Lord to hear his word but there's also a place for bowing in submission and in frustration you'll notice that John didn't fall dead that he fell as though dead he gave every appearance of being dead at Jesus feet motionless and speechless and incapable of action he was slain by almighty God by almighty grace and he was brought down to Jesus feet by an eternal weight of glory which he could not bear so he was in absolute frustration and utter helplessness that was the extent of it now I'm sure that we can never experience the exact and precise extent of John's frustration because it was of a special kind on a special occasion and for a special purpose and yet undoubtedly there is a frustration that is good and necessary for all of us by the grace of

God and it's one of deep humility and of a great sense of unworthiness in other words faith's view of Christ brings us down before it lifts us up faith's view of Christ sees for example our innate pride that needs to be toppled he who thinks he stands needs to take heed lest he fall for all he will sinful hearts need to be humbled self righteous spirits need to be brought down rebellious wills need to be cut to side and the clearer our view of Jesus in his purity and majesty and glory the clearer our view of him then the surer will this be done brought down to Jesus to Jesus evangelicals are very often and indeed properly accused of using too many cliches the evangelical vocabulary is very often full of cliches things we dislike

I think and one of the evangelical cliches is this that the way up is the way down and however much we may dislike the cliche the teaching there we can't deny that's how God deals with us the way up is the way down he brings us down in great mercy he prostrates us he humbles us in the dust and it's there that we learn so many things as we lie at his feet humbled by the Lord himself and you know God has his own way of toppling us you think of Nebuchadnezzar that proud arrogant ruthless king of Babylon Nebuchadnezzar was toppled by Daniel's God and to the extent that he that he was drenched with the dew of heaven and he ate grass like a ox outside living outside he was brought down so low and only then did God bless that man and exalt him spiritually in great mercy thus prostrate

[25:24] I shall learn of thee what now I feebly prove that God alone in Christ can be unutterable love now there is John's response to the vision he had let's go on now to the second thing and notice Christ's response to the John he loved Christ's response to the John he loved now prostration was not final for John and whatever prostration or humbling may be ours it's not final for us prostration is the precursor of restoration Jesus had much for John to do both for him and for his church to the end of time and he required John to pick up his pen and to write what he saw and in order to do that Jesus first of all had to pick up John before

John could pick up his pen and Jesus did that Jesus restored his soul and then put him to work and I want us to notice now how Christ's restoring grace was communicated to his prospered servants and it was so in two ways first by what he did and then by what he said first by what he did what did he do he touched him Jesus touched him he laid here is John testimony again he the one John saw he laid his right hand upon me now Jesus didn't have to but he chose to just in the case of some as in the case of some of his healing miracles while on earth he touched the person he was going to heal not because he had to but because he chose to and this touch formed a bond and it formed a bond with his prostrate servant in this vision and a token of fellowship and a means of assurance

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just as when someone grips us by the arm or or puts a hand on the shoulder on our shoulder to assure us that we're not alone and that he's with us now John needed
Christ's touch badly for he was badly shaken and no other touch would do no touch of an angel would do why because Christ's touch was with the hand that had in it the marks of the nail up to his hand in other words the one who touched John was the one whose hand was pierced and who knew better than John ever knew what it was to be brought low and by one who knew and experienced what John never did when as the eternal son he was forsaken by the eternal father on the cross it was the hand of that glorious being and savior who touched John and it's the eternal son himself who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities to whom our infirmities are intelligible for he knows our frame he remembers we are dust and it's the eternal son who touches our immortal spirit through his infallible word and through his own holy spirit and then as John says with his strong right hand he lifts us up and keeps us from sinking and holds us steady he laid his right hand upon me the hand that symbolizes strength so the right hand of
Jesus is an energy imparting right hand and a spirit restoring right hand and the same exalted Lord is in the midst of his church at this very moment and is available to his people at this very moment he can turn our sadness into gladness and our sorrows into singing and our our deadness into livelihood and liveliness and in doing so he makes us capable of serving him perhaps with a pen or in some other way but you see his touch through his word in the hand of the spirit is so needful for us in our frailty and in our weakness thy touch has still its ancient power no word from thee can fruitless fall here in this solemn evening hour and in thy mercy heal us all may he touch us by his word and spirit and may we touch him even touch the border of his long road the symbol of his kingliness that's the first thing he touched him and the other thing is this he addressed him he communicated grace and restored his soul first of all by touching him and then by addressing him so John not only felt the touch of the master's hand but he heard the sound of the master's voice and John again bears testimony he says he said to me he said to me he heard the sound of his master's voice let us notice briefly the cluster of marvellous things that he said to his prostrate servant first of all he said don't be afraid fear not the fear produced in John by the majesty of Christ's person was to be removed by the word of
Christ's power fear thou not the Lord Jesus doesn't want prostrate paralysed motionless people in his church forever and so he restores them and lifts them up by his penetrating and comforting word in his perfect love he would cast out our fear for fear is torment and in his perfect love he says to us fear thou not for I have redeemed thee I have called thee by your name you are mine that was the first thing then he addressed him and said don't be afraid then the next thing is this he said I am the first and the last now the fear not was an exhortation to John but the rest of what's in our text was instruction to
[32:42] John he explains to John now why he has no reason to fear and he says first of all I am the first I am the first before Abraham was I am the Lord Jesus existed before he was ever born and he wore a crown of glory long before he wore a crown of thorns and he held a royal scepter long before he held a feeble reed for he is from everlasting I am the first and he's still the same still the first and then he says I am the last he is the summation or the consummation or the sum and substance of all things not only is he from everlasting he is to everlasting but notice this he is both first and last at the same time now with ourselves one can be first and another last but no one can be both first and last at the same time in the same class but

Jesus can and Jesus is he is the first he is of yesterday and at the same time he is the last he is forever and ever of yesterday and forever and ever and my dear friends that's why we have no need to fear for there is never a time when he is not with us and there is never a time when we are beyond the reach of his loving touch and of his comforting words he is the first and he is the last and then he says thirdly I am the living one I am the living one who was dead and behold him alive forever more now he was dead he is the living one but to be sure he was dead he was the dead one he became obedient unto death he tasted death for every man he slew death by dying and by his death he loosed us from our sins by grace and to
God and his father but John sees him now as the living one alive forevermore in glory within the veil what happened well it was surely that in the silence of the grave he stirred he awoke he left undisturbed the grave clothes that were around him he dismissed the stone as if it wasn't there he walked away from his own grave and now he rose to die he rose in order to live never more to die to live in the power of an endless life I am the living one and Jesus says fear not fear not for we have

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one now this very night we have one within the veil who knows our fears for no one else does who knows our burdens and our stresses and our troubles for no one else does and whose livingness and whose glory bring to us in our hearing and frustration a living hope and then finally he says I have the keys of hell and of death or this can be translated I think better I have the keys of death and the unseen world now here's another reason why we should not fear keys are the symbol of authority and power so the Lord Jesus can shut and no one can open he can open and no one can shut and the Lord Jesus has power over death and over hell and the word hell there means not the place of torment but the unseen world the realm of the dead he has authority over death and over the unseen world that means he has authority over the entrance into the unseen world which is death and he has authority over the unseen world himself itself the realm of the dead and you see what this means in turn it means that what lies beyond this world is neither ungoverned nor ungovernable death and the unseen world are both within
Christ's domain and dominion so he says fear not you believe in God believe also in me I have the keys of the entrance into the unseen world and I have authority over the unseen world itself hear thou not but trust only and surely that's the supreme reason for not fearing for if we are believers then he who has the keys swinging at his golden girdle will open to us the eternal kingdom from which we never will go out eternal love is on the throne having loved his own who are in the world he loves them to the end and the lord of patmos is the lord with whom we all have to do if we don't do with him now we'll do with him one day we have something to do with him one day and he has much to do with us one day therefore let's bow before the living one who gives eternal life to us many as have been given to him and the many are a great multitude which no man can number what a vision was given to
[39:03] John why was it given to John and why was he asked to record it not only for the seven churches in Asia but for the world but for people down to the end of time and to the end of the world that we might learn from it that we might be taught about the almightyness of Christ that he is both mighty to save and able to subdue all things unto himself he is robed with kingliness and majesty able to subdue all things unto himself that's the one before whom we've got to appeal and so the question comes to us what are you doing with Jesus who is called Christ what are you doing with him there's one thing we must do and that is we must bow he is the king the ever living one the first and the last who lives in the power of an endless life who has the keys of authority swinging from his girdle whatever else we must do we must bow before

Jehovah bow says the psalmist and we are to bow in order to adore him in order to adore him who is king of kings and lord of lords may our view of John's vision and of Christ's response to John's vision move us to fall at his feet and to crown him as the lord of our life and the god of our salvation let us pray we ask thy blessing oh god upon thy word this evening we thank thee for bringing these things before us we thank thee for the greatness and majesty of our lord jesus he is no longer a little babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger he is not gentle jesus meek and mild he is the high and the lofty one the almighty the king of creation lord enable us in our feebleness and weakness to bow in submission to bow in adoration to bow in humility lord we pray that thou will deliver us from our self sufficiency that thou will topple our pride and our arrogance so that we might bow lowly at jesus feet look upon us we humbly pray and grant us the blessing we need and as we part do not part from us but may we be able to recall these things that thou was brought before us to our minds and as we enter into this new week with its new decisions and problems and difficulties and testing oh may we put our hand in the hand of our risen lord and know that he says to us fear not
I have called thee by thy name thou art mine for his great name's sake amen

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