

Revelation 2:1-7

Sunday, July 12, 2020

Outline:

I. The Christians (2:1a)

II. The Christ (2:1b)

III. The Commendation (2:2-3, 6)

IV. The Conviction (2:4)

V. The Counsel (2:5a, 7a)

VI. The Consequences (2:5b, 7b)

I. The Christians (2:1a)

A. The Leadership - the Angel (Messenger)

Angel = messenger; and the context seems to indicate that this message was to be given to-and-through the pastor of the church; the teachers of the church were to spread the word.

We as pastors and leaders are so accountable to heed, and feed, and lead; we're not manufacturers we are distributors...as Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 11:23a**, "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you..."

The Lord longs to use His leaders as vessels for victory.

B. The Fellowship - the church at Ephesus

Ephesus was a great city of the day; it was located in the Province of Asia Minor, with a population of up to 500,000 people. It was a travel-hub on the highway to Rome; it was the primary port on the Asian coast.

There in Ephesus they had one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world - the Temple of the Goddess Artemis - so people would travel there from all over the world.

They even had a theater that seated 25,000 people. It was a city like Los Angeles, New York, London, Rome, or Paris.

The church had been founded by Paul the Apostle on his 3rd Missionary journey in Acts 19.

It was a perfect work in God's perfect timing. You might remember that in the beginning of Paul's 2nd Missionary Journey Paul tried to go there, but according to Acts 16:6 the Spirit closed the doors and did not permit them to preach the Word in Asia.

And then, at the end of that same missionary journey, he made a pit stop there in Ephesus, and we read in **Acts 18:20-21**, "When they asked *him* to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent, but took leave of them, saying, 'I must by all

means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing.' And he sailed from Ephesus."

And by God's grace, in His perfect timing, we refer to it as Paul's 3rd Missionary Journey, he headed for Ephesus and God did a wonderful work there, where Paul faithfully served and ministered for 3 years.

Over the years the church was blessed with great brothers and sisters such as Apollos, Aquilla, Priscilla; eventually Timothy pastored the church in Ephesus, and according to tradition, even John the Beloved was the pastor there for a season.

II. The Christ (2:1b)

A. Jesus the One who holds the 7 stars in His right hand

(a little more detail than 1:16 - notice - "had" "holds") "had" = to have, to possess; "holds" (krateo) this Greek word actually comes from a root word meaning "power," so it speaks of having power over, to be Master of, and God not only has these pastors, He holds them; He not only has these leaders, He leads these leaders...may we never forget that.

Selecting them, protecting them; when we answer that call there's now an even more significant meaning to that phrase, "to have and hold, from this day forward."

B. Jesus the One who walks in the midst of the 7 golden lampstands

Jesus is not an absent One who watches us distantly, He's the present One, Who walks with us, Personally.

Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

He's not just controlling of the church, He's strolling in the church - up-and-down the aisles, a constant companion in our journey as a congregation.

This is the way it was in the beginning, something revealed in **Genesis 3:8**, "And they heard the sound of the LORD God **walking** in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden."

There was a time when Adam and Eve walked with God - before the fall; sin separated them for a season, but salvation restored that relationship.

This is the way it should be - even in the Old Testament we read in **Micah 6:8**, "He has shown you, O man, what *is* good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"

And so, there's that "walk-with" - but there's also that "walk-through."

(Inspection - Vons - Bill Davilla)

III. The Commendation (2:2-3, 6)

A. Hard-Working

1. Works

The Greek word is "ergon" and refers to working in a business, employment, occupation - any enterprise or undertaking of production and accomplishment of hand or mind - both physically and mentally.

2. Labor

This Greek word is "kopos" and refers so intense labor united with troublesome toil. He uses the same root word in v. 3 "kopiao" which means to grow weary, tired, exhausted with toil or burdens, to labor with wearisome effort.

There in v. 3 Jesus says, "...you have labored for My Name's sake and have not become weary." Or as the KJV puts it, "you have not fainted."

B. Enduring

1. Patience (v. 2, 3)

The Greek word is "hupomone" = steadfastness, constancy, endurance. In the NT this word speaks of a person who is not swayed from their service to Christ even in the midst of suffering.

2. Persevered (v. 3)

Borne the burden, persevered under pressure, carried the load, taken the yoke of your Lord Jesus Christ.

You're still standing...that was the Ephesian church.

C. Discerning

1. You cannot bear those who are evil

2. You have tested those who say they are apostles and are not and found them to be liars.

There's an interesting reference to this church by Ignatius of Antioch who wrote them and said, *"You all live according to truth, and no heresy has a home among you; indeed, you do not so much as listen to anyone if they speak anything except concerning Jesus Christ in truth. I have heard that some strangers came your way with a wicked teaching. But you did not let them sow it among you. You stopped up your ears to prevent admitting what they disseminated."*

Unfortunately, there's way too much tolerance in the church nowadays. We lack that discernment and discipline to discipline the disobedient; to divide over destructive doctrines.

3. You hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans

We don't have a lot of information on this. The few references to this heresy in the writings of the church fathers link this to Nicolas, one of the 7 deacons (Acts 6).

The letter to the Pergamum also mentions the heresy of the Nicolaitans.

Clement of Alexandria wrote that, "*The Nicolaitans abandon themselves to pleasure like goats...leading to a life of self-indulgence.*"

A very commendable church - they were hard-working, persevering, they were discerning:

1 John 4:1, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world."

They were busy builders, movers in ministry, intensely involved, willing to serve, to suffer, to make sacrifices; they were discerning, orthodox, they would not compromise in their Christians creed; they were able to detect and reject false teaching, false apostles.

IV. The Conviction (2:4)

Jesus said, "I have this against you...**you have left your first love.**"

Not that they **lost** their first love, but they'd **left** their first love. To leave means, "...to go away from, to depart."

When someone leaves the Lord, it doesn't usually happen overnight, in a day, it usually happens as someone just **drifts** away.

The personal intimate relationship becomes a rut, a routine. The movement of God is reduced to a machine; it's not personal it's mechanical, you're going through the motions but there's no true emotions.

One of the interesting things about this church in Ephesus is that the Lord doesn't identify any outward sin. He **does** in His letters to the **other** churches, but here in Ephesus it's something that no one else would ever know; that no one else would see - but He, who does that "walk-through...and through."

I believe many have left their "first" love.

Who, what, where, when, why, how?

1. Who? (Matthew 22:36-40; 10:37)

Luke 14:26, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."

This happens anytime we put anyone or anything before the Lord.

2. What/Where (John 21:15a)

(more than the fish, fun or finances of fishing)

(relations, ambitions/passions, possessions)

2 Timothy 4:10a, "for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica..."

3. When (Luke 9:57-62)

Me first? (Follow NOW - be saved, sitting/serving)

4. Why? (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

Definitely applicable to the church in Ephesus.

Jesus knew how their version of Christianity had become a burden rather than a blessing. He saw how their service, how in their hearts they had an attitude that said "I got to," instead of saying "I get to." It wasn't done out of devotion, it was done out of duty, even drudgery.

5. How? (Mark 12:29-30)

V. The Counsel (2:5a, 7a)

A. Remember

Remember therefore from where you have fallen; memory is a precious gift; for many of us that beginning was so special.

Yes, I realize that at times to look back can be sinful, but sometimes it's sensible.

You were so blessed to be free and forgiving, such an awesome attitude of gratitude.

It was like when Jacob served for Rachel we read those amazing words in **Genesis 29:20**, "So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed *only* a few days to him because of the love he had for her."

Jeremiah 2:2, "Go and cry in the hearing of Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: 'I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your betrothal, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown.'"

B. Repent

And DO the first works; and we've seen that it's not just what we're doing, it's why we're doing it, how we're doing it, who we're doing this for - if it's not love for the Lord, it's annoying to Him, it's nothing for them, and it's unprofitable for us.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have *the gift of prophecy*, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing."

We need to remember, and repent. To repent means to change direction, to make a u-turn - it's more than intentions, it's actions.

***Genesis 13:1-4**

"Jesus is, the sweet, sweet love of my soul - Jesus is, the only One making me whole, He's everything to me, He's all I want to be, that's who Jesus is; He's all that I believe, He's every breath I breathe, that who Jesus is."

C. Realize what the Spirit is saying (7a)

VI. The Consequences (2:5b, 7b)

Negative and Positive

A. If they DID NOT repent

Jesus would come to them quickly/suddenly and remove the lampstand from its place.

Their light would be extinguished, their witness in the world would be removed; it may have even been a threat to their very existence as a local congregation.

John Stott, "*No church has a secure and permanent place in the world, it is continuously on trial.*"

John MacArthur, "*...Christ threatened divine judgment that would bring an end to the Ephesian church.*"

Ron Rhodes, *"This may mean that the Lord would remove the church from its place of service and usefulness. Or it may mean that God would bring an end to the church."* (locally)

John Stott, *"Only when love burns can light shine."*

Unfortunately, they did not stay true; by the middle ages the church of Ephesus was non-existent. A traveler visiting the village found only 3 Christians there, and he said these 3 had been sunken in ignorance and apathy.

B. If they DID repent (overcome)

Jesus would give to eat from the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.

That Tree of Life - (Genesis 2:9; 3:22, 24) (live forever in heaven)

***Revelation 22:1-12**

Our faith is being tested - the enemy is working overtime in trying to ruin us through isolation, intimidation; no deep fellowship with Christians or deep relationship with Christ - this is a time of testing...many in their hearts are drifting...my prayer is that God would use His word, to bring us back to where we belong. In love - and in right relationship with God...look at the cosmic consequences.

John 6:66-68, "From that *time* many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, 'Do you also want to go away?' But Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.'"

G.K Chesterton, the great English novelist had a reputation for absent-mindedness. He was like me - and relied upon his efficient and organization-minded wife to guide him in all his practical affairs, including his travel itinerary. Without her, he was literally "prone to wander."

(True story) once while on a lecture tour, he sent his wife a telegram which read, "Am in Birmingham, where ought I to be?" She wired back a single simple word..."home"
"home."

I think we all wander, at times, at least a little; for some, maybe you're far, far away. It's a simple message, come home to the Lord...return to your first love.