

Ephesus –The Church with Heart Problems

Revelation 2:1-7

When one looks to the book of Revelation one finds their obvious patterns that help us to understand the book more clearly.

The same particular pattern occurs when you look at the writings to the seven churches addressed in Revelation 2-3. The comparisons are noted:

- **The Commission** – “To the angel of the church at. . . write. . .”
- **The Character** – “These things saith he that. . .” Then follows the words that paint an introductory portrait of that church.
- **The Commendation** – “I know thy works. . .” Then there are favorable compliments that are listed to the church being addressed.
- **The Condemnation** – “*But I have somewhat against thee. . .*” Then there is a list of criticism that is given in sequence.
- **The Correction** – These are varied commands that are not couched in diplomacy. God is basically saying to the pastor and to that church “FIX THE PROBLEM!!!”
- **The Call** – “He that hath an ear. . .” This is spoken to all seven churches. (This part is uniform in all seven letters, except that in the last four it takes the seventh place in order rather than the sixth.)
- **The Challenge** – “To him that overcometh. . .” Each of the letters has a promise for the overcomer who rises above the temptations and perils of each of the churches.

The One who walks through the church is described in Revelation 1:11-20. It is a descriptive picture of One who has the ability to redeem by also to prosecute.

The Church of Ephesus

The first church that is addressed is the church of Ephesus. Ephesus was located in the largest city of the Roman province of Asia. By the end of the first century, it had been one of the most thriving seaports in the world.

But now the silt from the Cayster River brought down from the mountains had begun to fill in the harbor. Careful engineering had kept some of the channels open, but the port was now accessible through great difficulty to sailing vessels and it was losing its importance in the grand scope of history.

The History of the Ephesian Church – Acts 19

To gain an idea of the surrounding atmosphere that prevailed in the region of Ephesus, one would have to look back to *Acts 19* where Paul found himself set at odds with the craftsman of the city.

The chief cult in the city was devoted to the goddess Diana. There was a huge temple that had been constructed there and was recognized as one of the wonders of the ancient world.

The worship of Diana was attributed to her supposed fall from heaven and the craftsmen who worked with precious metals had formed idols for the Ephesians to worship. They formed a strong union of workers and when Paul arrived in Acts 19 and began to preach about a Christ that could save them from their sins, a furor arose.

At Ephesus:

- John's disciples were introduced to the Holy Ghost – *Acts 19:1-6*
- John's disciples were baptized in Jesus' Name – *Acts 19:5*
- John's disciples received the Holy Ghost – *Acts 19:6*
- Paul taught for two years and three months in Ephesus – *Acts 19:8-10*
- Special miracles occurred during this era at Ephesus – *Acts 19:11*
- Handkerchiefs were sent out from Paul and healing occurred; demons were cast out – *Acts 19:12*
- Books about witchcraft and other material was burned, the value being worth fifty thousand pieces of silver – *Acts 19:19*
- "So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed" – *Acts 19:20*

Then Demetrius got together with the other silversmiths of the city and the Bible declares they began to spread great confusion. Through this Paul found himself facing an uproar. Yet in all of this God was at work and people were prepared to go into the church.

Yet in the midst of all those troubles the birth of the Gospel at Ephesus proved to be one of the early footholds of the church. This strong church in the face of the enemy found an ability to establish itself as a headquarters church and evangelize all the province of Asia.

The qualities that made them fanatical pagans, once the Spirit had been instilled in them, they became zealous Pentecostals.

The church at Ephesus:

- Had a foundation constructed by the great Apostle Paul.
- It was sustained by the careful labor of Aquila and Priscilla.
- It had been favored by eloquent sermons of Apollos.
- It had been blessed with a young pastor named Timothy, whom Paul described as one who was likeminded. Timothy would give the prime of his life to the church at Ephesus.

A blessed church, a godly church, a revival church was Ephesus.

But now an entire generation has passed since the founding of this early group of men and women. With the passing of the first converts came a cooling in the fervor and intensity of their relationship with God. The victories that the pioneers had won by labor and endurance became the accepted privileges that the children now enjoyed.

The Presence of Jesus Christ in the Ephesian Church

Now in John's vision, he notes a Christ walking among the church at Ephesus and assessing the character and content of that church. We must never get an attitude in our lives that we do not want a Christ to walk the halls of our heart nor the halls of this church.

The Lord is emphasized by John as a Preserver and Watchman (2:1). No matter how great the failure of the church may be, there is a God who will still speak to its leaders and will never abandon them to a total loss.

The Commendation

The commendation starts with the words "I know thy works. . ." Special notice is taken of the Ephesian church. They are known for their labor and endurance; it is a church that has not grown weary with well-doing. Despite the excessive external pressures that have come to this church, they have stood strong and continued steadfastly.

They also have shown themselves to be committed to the Word of God. They have forced self-appointed apostles to align themselves with the Word of God and those who have refused to do so have been called false. They are commended for this.

Much can be said about a church that has a purity of discipline in it. To gain a view of an undisciplined church, take a look at the Corinthians. The atmosphere was chaotic at best. Those who grumble about a church that has discipline and standards and guidelines for both leaders and laity are very foolish.

There were some other traits about this church that set it apart. It was a patient church. The patience of the Ephesians is mentioned twice in these verses. The second time that patience is mentioned is not as a feature of a soldier or worker but rather the patience of him who can suffer and suffer in silence. This kind of patience brings forth something to us. Patience, endurance, and fortitude. A stick-to-it-iveness.

The Condemnation

The condemnation of this church:

- Had nothing to do with embracing false doctrine.
- Had nothing to do with their refusal to support both home and foreign missions.
- Had nothing to do with a huge church split.
- Had nothing to do with allowing false prophets to take advantage of them.
- There were no great scandals involving their leadership.

- Their reputation as a church was spotless.
- The organization was still functioning smoothly.

But the condemnation of this church had to do with one thing: **Revelation 2:4** “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, **because thou hast left thy first love.**”

The fatal flaw is this: You have left your first love.

The Greek Word for left is: APHIEMI (af-ee'-ay-mee). It's meaning is to forsake, lay aside, leave, omit, to send away.

The inner springs of its life had begun to run dry.

The Correction

From this state the Lord gives them a correction that can be summed up into three words:

- Remember
- Repent
- Repeat

2:5 “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen.” Perhaps their failure had been so gradual they did not even recognize it. The decline had been so slight that there would have been little noticeable change from day to day, but at the end of a generation the difference between the first love and the existing condition was quite obvious.

2:5 “and repent.” Repentance always means a literal change of mind and a reversal of a position that they had once held.

2:5 “and do the first works.” The first works were the things that had earlier set them apart from the world because of their devotion to Jesus Christ.

The church was not inactive, but its activity lacked the warmth of love that is always going to be necessary for any church to really touch its world.

The Love Factor

It dealt with the power of a disciples love for Jesus Christ and what it will cause him to do in his service to God.

John mentions here in this series of verses, that the first love must be restored.

The Peril of a Lost First Love

When men lose their early first love for Christ, there are some things that began to occur in their lives.

Savage seas began to rage in the heart like it did with Samson.

When the temperature of one's love begins to lower you will find yourself among the men of Korah.

When the altar of mammon begins to rule, you are sent away as the sorrowful rich young ruler.

When the first love dies and you began to labor in the service of self, you become cynical, suspicious, and cold like the man in the book of Ecclesiastes.

The man with the lost love usually has his head going in the right direction but it is his heart that has begun to stray.

The devil is going to use everything in this world to conquer your first love for God. He will use deception, treachery, charm, and depraved actions of others. He will try to use pride, ambition, selfishness, and even luxury to get you to give up the value of your own soul.

The Power of a Regained First Love

Just as that may seem negative to everyone of us in this place there is something that happens to men who regain their first love for God again.

When the first love is restored to us:

- ✓ Spiritual things which seemed to be far off are now within reach.
- ✓ Revival which seemed far away now seems to be in the next step.
- ✓ Life becomes full of meaning and of value for us.

The Power of The Overcomer

You find this word in every aspect of the letters to the seven churches:

- **Revelation 2:7** “. . . To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” **(Ephesus)**
- **Revelation 2:11** “. . . He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.” **(Smyrna)**
- **Revelation 2:17** “. . . To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.” **(Pergamum)**
- **Revelation 2:26** “. . . And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:” **(Thyatira)**
- **Revelation 3:5** “. . . He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.” **(Sardis)**
- **Revelation 3:12** “. . . To Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my

God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.” **(Philadelphia)**

- **Revelation 3:21** “. . . To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”

Overcometh is a word that tells us of battle and of victory.

- There is an intimation that there might be an enemy lurking here.
- There is a hell in this word and there is a devil in this word.
- In this word there is an understanding that your spiritual life is a fight, that everyday you are on a battlefield.
- Desire is in this word and desire satisfied is in this word. Our desire for more of God, more of His Spirit, more of His power, all contained in this word.

Overcometh gives us indication for one other word: Crown.

2 Timothy 4:5-8 “But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.” “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.” “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:” “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

Something must burn within us. We are people of destiny. We cannot afford to have a desensitized church with a desensitized preacher. Our entire life has prepared us for where we are today.