

# Too Much of a Good Thing

REVELATION: YOUR STORY IN GOD'S STORY, Week 5

*Revelation 2:1-7 (NIV)*

## I. The \_\_\_\_\_ Title

<sup>1</sup>“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands.

## II. The \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>2</sup>I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false.

<sup>3</sup>You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

*(see also verse 6)*

## III. The \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>4</sup>Yet I hold this against you:

You have forsaken the love you had at first.

## IV. The \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>5</sup>Consider how far you have fallen!

Repent and do the things you did at first.

## V. The \_\_\_\_\_

If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

<sup>6</sup>But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

<sup>7</sup>Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

# The Bottom Line

**an** \_\_\_\_\_

...by \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ of what is \_\_\_\_\_.

...by \_\_\_\_\_ our value of truth with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

...by \_\_\_\_\_ of ways we may have \_\_\_\_\_.

## **On the Recipients of Revelation** (Weima, *Sermons to the Seven Churches*, 18-19)

A common reading of the book of Revelation sees these seven churches as healthy communities of Christ followers who are suffering much for their faith at the hands of oppressive Roman authorities, and the book of Revelation is assumed to have been written to encourage these persecuted believers with the good news that Christ will ultimately be victorious and that their faith in him will be vindicated. This widespread but mistaken view of the readers' situation makes it too easy for contemporary Christians to ignore the book of Revelation because our current situation does not similarly involve this kind of persecution, and consequently Christ's message to the seven churches does not seem relevant to our day and situation.

The chiasmic arrangement of the sermons noted earlier helps to counter this view that focuses on the positive spiritual condition of the original recipients of John's revelation. As observed above, the external structure of the seven sermons emphasizes the overall poor state of the churches: the five unhealthy churches are located in key positions (beginning, center, and end), and the two healthy churches are not only in the minority but are hidden among the unhealthy churches. The largely unhealthy spiritual condition of the churches is confirmed by a careful analysis of the seven sermons, especially of the “complaint” sections, which lays bare the significant problems occurring in five of these congregations. These problems include a failure to love fellow believers and the embracing of idolatry, sexual immorality, false teaching, and complacency—all problems with which the affluent Western church struggles today. Although the central problem for the two healthy churches is persecution, which is not a primary concern for the Western church, opposition to the Christian faith is increasingly an issue for many contemporary churches around the globe. All of this makes the sermons to the seven churches extremely relevant to our times and important texts on which to preach and teach. As Keener (2000: 39) observes:

Traditionally scholars have viewed Revelation as addressing oppressed Christians facing persecution from the mighty Roman state. Today many emphasize instead that the book addressed “complacent, spiritually anemic Christians.” ...Revelation speaks to churches both alive and dead, but more of the churches are in danger of compromising with the world than of dying from it. This makes the book relevant to North American Christianity today.

*For much of the structure and content of this message I am indebted to Jeffrey A. D. Weima's book, The Sermons to the Seven Churches of Revelation (2021).*