

## The Church God Desires

Revelation 2:1-7

7/29/07

### Intro

In this section of Revelation, John was told to write to seven churches in Asia Minor. These churches represented all churches in that there were things that they were commended for, there were things they were corrected for, and to each was given a promise for those who would have ears to hear and overcome.

The first church he writes to was to the church at Ephesus. This was port town on the mouth of the Cayster River as well as on the main Roman highway. This was the largest city in Asia Minor of about 500,000 and the capital of the Roman government in that area.

The church was founded by Paul and it was there a great riot broke out because of “the Way.” Acts 19:23-32

He who walks among the lampstands gave them some words of commendation and correction and our church can learn what it means to have a church that God desires by seeing what they did well and in what ways God wanted them to change.

**These are lessons we can learn from the church at Ephesus.**

### **I. Do Not Grow Weary**

- Paul wrote that we should not grow weary in doing good, and the Ephesians are commended because they worked diligently.

### A. Do much – but for the right reasons

- They were commended for their deeds and their toil and their perseverance.
- They did much and were very effective. They fed the poor, they reached out to the lost, they helped the orphan and the widow.
- In this they were commended because they didn't grow weary.

### **Ecclesiastes 9:10, Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might;**

- But because of how God corrected them, we know that they didn't have the right heart.
- In other words, they were doing the right things, but for all the wrong reasons.

### **Hebrews 6:10, For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.**

- One thing that we must have settled in our hearts that we are not accepted by God because of what we do, but because we are in Christ.

### **Galatians 2:16, nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law;**

## B. Highly value the truth

- Another commendation the Lord gave that church was that they could not endure evil men and that they tested those who claimed to be Apostles, but were false.
- This church was *able to discern* because they had the rock solid truth. They had been founded by Paul, had Timothy as a pastor for many years, and finally, the Apostle John lived out his years there after he was allowed to leave Patmos.
- This is clear evidence why it is essential that we teach through God's Word in its entirety chapter by chapter, verse by verse. We must have the truth to be able discern the false.

**I John 4:1, Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.**

**Illus – There have been several denominations that started out founded on the truth, but became diluted in an attempt to become more socially accepted.**

**Instead of changing the world, they themselves were the ones that changed.**

**Illus – In Africa, there is a custom of allowing visiting “pastors” to be introduced and then given the pulpit.**

**As soon as we discovered this, we put an end to it. We must be very careful who is allowed to take the pulpit.**

**Illus – There was a recent article in the Oregonian about a pastor who was once a southern Pentecostal preacher, but became an inclusionist (teaching that everyone is already saved). He came to town wanting to spread his new found gospel to as many people as possible. Fortunately, most people reject this teaching, but there are a few whose ears will be tickled.**

**II Timothy 4:2-4, preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.**

**Illus - Spiritual fads have come and gone. There was the ‘laughter movement,’ and there was the ‘barking movement,’ these were all supposedly of the Spirit, but someone wasn’t using discernment.**

- Jesus stood amongst the lampstands, which was a picture of the churches. We are to be a place where the light and glory of the Lord shines over the community.

## C. Hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans

- Vs 6 -- Little is known of this sect of people and their doctrines and beliefs.
- Some have suggested that their name is symbolic of their practices and beliefs.

- The name means: nikos- conquering, or power over... laos- the laity; the people.
- The name suggests that this group taught that they should have the authority over the people to 'be their lord' and tell them how to live their lives.
- Jesus warned us not to be this way.

**Matthew 20:25-28, But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."**

**Illus – There have been religions that set up priests over the people and place themselves in front of God and tell people that access to the God is through them. Then to continue, they keep the Word of God out of their hands.**

- In Revelation 1:5 John wrote that God made us to a kingdom of priests.

**Illus – Sometimes someone will try to refer to me as 'Reverend.' Such a title suggests 'awe and reverence.'**

**I much prefer the word 'pastor' which means shepherd. The name suggests one who cares for and feeds the flock; serving, not over-lord of the church.**

**Illus – One day I came in the building and something didn't smell right. I quickly discerned it was the sewer backing up. The problem was that the Wednesday service was only an hour away or so. I knew this problem would require fast action if we were to have a service. A Reverend doesn't clean out the sewer, but a pastor does.**

## II. Return to Your First Love

- After all the commendation, Jesus then addresses what He does not approve; they had left their first love.
- There is a real danger if we allow religion and ritual to creep into our lives because it replaces relationship.
- Busyness without love is the beginning of religion.
- Jesus then told them what He wanted them to do.

### A. Remember the love you had at the first

**Illus – Things can change over time; marriage can become routine; the job that at first was exciting and new can become mundane.**

**The first child is so special; flash cards are brought to the hospital and everything is written in a book. By the time the third or fourth one comes along, everything changes.**

- The first thing Jesus wants them to do is to remember.

**Psalm 44:20-21, If we had forgotten the name of our God or extended our hands to a strange god, would not God find this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart.**

- If we have forgotten how wonderful things were at the first, one thing is for certain, He hasn't forgotten.

**Jeremiah 2:2, Thus says the Lord, "I remember concerning you the devotion of your youth, the love of your betrothals, your following after Me in the wilderness, through a land not sown."**

- We need to remember the love we had at first. That's why communion is so important, because it reminds us again of the great price that Jesus paid for our salvation.

B. Repent and do the deeds you did at first

- Many people don't like the word, 'repent,' but it's a word with a simple meaning, 'to change direction,' or 'to have a new mind.'
- John the Baptist was anointed by the Lord to call the people to change their heart.

**Luke 1:17, It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the father back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.**

- What follows then, with repentance is doing the deeds you did at first.

- What were you doing when you were on fire for the Lord? Do those things again.
- Were you worshipping the Lord and sang with all your might? Do that again.
- Were you hungry after God's Word and reading it with an eager heart? Do that again.

**Psalm 84:1-4, How lovely are Your dwelling places, O Lord of hosts! My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. The bird also has found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even among Your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. How blessed are those who dwell in Your house! They are ever praising You.**

- The words to a song we love captures well the heart that returns to its first love; "How Deep the Father's Love."

**How deep the Father's love for us,  
how vast beyond all measure,  
That He should give His only Son,  
To make a wretch His treasure.  
Why should I gain from His reward?  
I cannot give an answer.  
But this I know with all my heart,  
His wounds have paid my ransom.**