

LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS

Rev. 2:1-7

Intro. The letter was addressed "to the 'angel' (messenger-minister) of the church in Ephesus." To be communicated by him to the congregation. (cf. 1:20). Ephesus greatly favored. Two apostolic letters. No other church so favored. Great city.

Though written by the hand of John, the letter was dictated by the Lord Jesus. A twofold description

A. "Holdeth the seven stars in his right hand." The stars are the angels or messengers of the church. (1:20). This a comforting thought to them that are true to him because:

1. (Jno. 10:27-28) No one takes out of his hand.
2. (Acts 7). He is with them. If killed, to glory go.
3. (Matt. 10:30). Hairs numbered. Note sparrows fall.
4. (Zech. 11:17a, I Cor. 9:16b). Terror to unfaithful minister.

B. "Walketh in the midst." etc. (1:20) He is present in the churches to (a) Inspect (b) Judge (c) Encourage. This a sobering thought and should have profound effect on all hearers.

C. Having introduced the Lord as the speaker, we directed to a consideration of his message. First, the language of...

I Commendation: "I know thy works" Only one who really knows. Nothing escapes his notice. ("Thou Lord which knowest the hearts of all men... Acts 1:24). (Heb. 4:12-13). He knows the good; he knows the bad and is abundantly able to reward or punish accordingly. We should therefore learn to pray as did David: (cf Ps. 139:23-24). He knows all, but points out the good first (difference between constructive and destructive critique). He points out the good first. He seems more intent on finding good than evil. What was right with the church:

A. Conduct. (1) Works, (Phil. 2:12) life in general (2) Labor, intense toil under difficulty and hardship. (3) Patience, steadfastness in the truth under very trying circumstances - unrelenting. (cf. v.3) (I Cor. 15:58)

B. Discipline. Note: contrast with I Cor. rebuke for lack of discipline. They set themselves against...

1. "Them which are evil". Patience will bear with a "weak" brother (Rom. 15:1), but not a false one. (II Thess. 3:6).
2. "Tried them" ("apostles") false teachers warned about in (Acts 20:28-30). 30 yrs. prior.

3. "Hatest the deeds of the N." (v. 6).
Probably taught Christian liberty gave licence. (viz. Fornication & Idolatry) (Jude 4, Rom. 6:1)

C. Doctrine was pure, indicated by the discipline against the evil and false. Doctrine must be pure. (Tit. 2:1, Matt. 15:9) But in spite of all this good, something was wrong - there was a fly in the ointment "nevertheless"...

II Condemnation. "Somewhat against thee." Brings only one charge but it is serious - heart disease. "One-things" can be fatal (Jas. 2:10-11 - i.e. sin against or set aside one thing God commands) They hated what God hated but didn't love what God loved.

A. "First love." Figure of conjugal love. First enthusiastic devotion of church to the Lord. (Jer. 2:2) (II Cor. 11:2b)

1. (I Cor. 13:1-3) Must have
2. (I Jno. 5:3, II Jno. 6, 8). Manifest in deeds.

3. Keeping pure in doctrine, but warmth waned - it had not turned to hate.

4. Difficult to hold high level.

B. What caused waning love?

1. Time

2. Conflict with the evil in others turns attention away from dangers in self (Gal. 6:1)

3. Attachment to the world. (I Jno. 2:15-17, Jas. 4:4, Lk. 8:14, II Tim. 4:10) To love world does not necessarily mean to love things inherently evil, but a turn of attention to (a) pleasure (b) business (c) family (d) pleasing self. (Lk. 14:26)

4. Pressure: (a) inside (I Cor. 5:6) (b) Out. (Matt. 24:12) Love to grow cold, is to let spiritual life die and corresponding inheritance slip away.

III Exhortation to repent: To revive fading love they were called on to do three things:

here → A. "Remember", good of a better past. (Ps. 137:1, Lk. 15:17-18a)

B. "Repent". Change of will, mind, purpose. You have failed at the 1st command. *Will Repent alone save?*

cut C. "Do first works" They were working, but deeds not from deep within. Works alone profitless (cf. Gal. 5:6) (Matt. 7:21-23). "Whence thou art fallen" (Eph. 1:15-16) The way to regain this warmth of affection, is not by working up a transient frenzy, nor by theorizing about it, but by patiently doing ones every duty - and love while doing.

D. Ephesus was pure in discipline, doctrine, and deeds but this not enough.

IV. Warning: "Will remove thy candlestick". Threatened with extinction. No idle threat because that church soon disappeared. No church long exists without love. They worshipped but not because of intense love for Him. The dead-line:

quickly

A. Lord is longsuffering, and bears with sins a while. If this were not true, none would be saved. (Rom. 3:23). But there is a dead-line beyond which, if we dare go, he will but us off.

B. When a church has attention called to evil and then will not do anything about it, the day of doom is certain.

C. (Prov. 1:28, 29:1)

V. Encouragement: (v. 7) To do two things

A. Hear the words of the Spirit. The heart that opens to Gods word will be filled with God's blessing.

B. Overcome the world (Rom. 12:2) the tree of life is promised, the victor. It was forfeited in Eden when man became disobedient. It is regained by warfare (i.e. life of obedience). It gives wonderful nourishment...eternal life.

C. (II Pet. 1:4, II Cor. 7:1) *Promises*

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