

Churches in Trouble at the beginning

Revelation 2:1 “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this:

2:1 To the angel (*aggelos*) - messenger, pastor-teacher. As the pastor-teacher teaches so goes the assembly. It is his message that is of importance to the messenger! His message, listen and decide if you agree.

I taught for some five years, and an entire board of deacons and most in the assembly decided that teaching on recovery from sin and being filled with the Holy Spirit was accomplished the same way as being saved as an unbeliever: by faith, by trusting in the one God sent. One of the great problems in the world today is the absence of the Power of the Holy Spirit in so many pastor-teachers and missionaries etc., because they are not trusting the Holy Spirit.

Where Jesus Christ speaks of two sheepfolds—one sheepfold, the called out ones, not a nation, but individuals called out of the world system, called out of sin into Jesus Christ: Jews & Gentiles - one in Christ. In the Old Testament God used a nation, a race, but now God is revealing His love through the church...or at least that is His design.

Revelation 2:1 in Ephesus write: Jesus Christ speaking to John

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We noted last lesson some of the things about Ephesus: industry, port, library, Temple of Diana, and industrial part of the Roman Empire and that is so important. SPQR. Often you start thinking that the Roman Empire is viewed as evil, degenerate, etc. but it was also a source of great prosperity, wealth, peace and travel on the roads and the outbreak of the Church Age.

Rome built roads that tied the cities,.Christianity spread throughout the empire because of these roads and the cities and peace.

next: Title or Description of Jesus Christ

Revelation 2:1 ...The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this:

This is a description of Jesus Christ. Remember, each one is pertinent to the circumstances of that local church.

The resurrected Christ who holds securely the seven stars, the 7 messengers (pastor-teachers) in His right hand, secure, with authority. Every pastor is under the authority of the Lord, not man, not even the congregation. But what is important here is what follows has very much to do with the failure of pastor-teacher; it is so important which pastor-teacher you choose to listen to.

Now we come to the commendation or as I prefer, the “diagnosis.”

Revelation 2:2 ‘I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot endure evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false;

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**Revelation 2:3 and you have perseverance
and have endured for My name's sake, and
have not grown weary.**

Wow! What an assembly of believers! there are nine *kai* (“and” in the Greek) rapidly building a great description of this assembly.

So we have to begin with a very important Principle. In fact, this is not just important, this is vital to understanding the Bible and is all through Scripture:

We will see two vital principles that I pray that God will cause me to communicate clearly and that His Spirit will reveal it to you.

1st Confusion between the Means and the Results.

As you read these verses they look very good, they look like what God desires and they are! These are all overt! Seen, but what is not seen is power or the means! And that is what God cares most about!

There are many things that characterize the Christian life, but just because they are there, does not mean they are from God. This is what is so confusing to so many in these passages. Christians, Pastors, and teachers etc., they see something and assume it is of God and wonderful! and right! But it has no place before God.

To get the point, if this church was even close to doing what God wanted there might be a little reprimand but look what God says He is going to do:

**Revelation 2:5 'Remember therefore from where
you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you
did at first; or else I am coming to you, and will
remove your lampstand out of its place--unless you
repent**

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This is how far off this assembly was. They looked good, but they were not even close to doing what God wanted! This is a point God made in the first book in Bible - 1st book written: the book of Job. Job was so sure he was doing it right, but Job was not even close.

This is a common error with so many Christians. The danger is that this problem can ruin believers' lives. They think they are doing everything God desires, like these believers in Ephesus and they are not even close to what God wants.

Things often look good. We saw this with the study of Abram and Esau. You will recall that Abraham was going to make the Plan of God happen. God had promised a male child. Abraham was going to see to it that the Plan of God took place. So he made the Plan of God happen. He went to Hagar and sure enough had a male child named Esau. And it looked good, looked like God's plan until you see Isaac!

One more point before we get into the details: that in His diagnosis of Ephesus there is not one sinful thing mentioned or even implied about them, yet He is going to take them out.

Question: Why? Why so drastic an action by Jesus? Because you just can't imagine how difficult it is to get someone who thinks they are doing it right to realize they are not even close.

If someone is in sin, that is relatively easy to get them to see, but if someone is so sure they are doing it right. It takes so much to get them to see the truth.

Alright, let's take a look at this local assembly who looks good!

Each letter begins with "I know." The diagnosis is based on the knowing of Jesus Christ as head of the Church. The knowing of Christ: Jesus Christ is God, and as God, He knows all things, He knows from His Omniscience; here as head of church, His knowing is also from

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observation - remember description: the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, this is a reference to the fact that He is there, He knows, & so u don't miss it

He walks in the midst of this local church.

Revelation 2:2 I know your deeds, your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot endure evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false;

Revelation 2:3 and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary.

Wow! What pastor would not be proud to have this said of their local church these people worked to point of exhaustion!

We now come to our second vital principle.

There are words that are in Scripture that are vital to our lives. But the problem is that everyone of these words have two meanings.

1st meaning according to God; Truth

2nd meaning of that same word that is not truth, not what the word means according to God! to the truth of the Gospel.

Words like: faith, love, obey, serve, & words like we have here in this passage: words like: deeds, toil, perseverance, endurance!

Start the **faith**: Many will claim they are saved by faith, but is it the faith that God is looking for?

Faith in member of Godhead: Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, God the Father.

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Or faith that if I do my part then I trust God to do His.

Faith that if I invite Him, Jesus, into my heart, I make Him Lord, I join church, I comment etc.

Obey: what does obey mean?

Most when they see the word obey, they see do & do, do & do law and performance etc

But to God: The obedience He is looking for is our faith.

Romans 16:26 'obedience that is faith'

Serve: two people can use same word, and mean different things

Read Josh. 24:14-19

Now verse 2:2 'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot endure evil men. You put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; 2:3 and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary.

Sounds wonderful: but

1st Confusion between Means & Results

2nd Words - meaning of words!

This is what most seminary students are taught, this is what most pastors desire... work -do and do, do and do, rule on rule, rule on rule.

Now not what we do but in what power, that is the issue! Flesh vs. Holy Spirit

**Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship,
created in Christ Jesus for good works, which**

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**God prepared beforehand, that we should
walk in them.**

Works of love! Toil, another concept that sounds so good, but again in itself is not. This refers to doing, working to the point of exhaustion, through difficulties, where you grow weary of doing them.

Both are desired but only in power and leading of Holy Spirit is meaningful to God

Then there are those who serve to point of exhaustion without complaint.

****Principle:** I am and always have been so thankful for believers in this church who labor to this point, you work at home or in job, 4-60 hours a week, then you come here and do even more. I am aware of this, and I am thankful for every person who does this. He/She sees things that need to be done, and do them or get them done. So these things are desired in an assembly, in fact they must occur for all the things to come together. It is why we have spiritual gifts. Perseverance, they persevere in works and toil, they persevere in learning doctrine; they are not distracted! discouraged but another word that has two meanings, if in and by Holy Spirit and that you cannot endure evil men, false teachers or teachers who teach false doctrine. This is another important word, many just apply definition of Greek *kakos* to anything they don't like. They are bad, evil, worthless

This is not a member who sins, or none of us would be here. This refers to someone who is a troublemaker, one who is injurious to the assembly, does harm to the momentum of assembly. Seek out troublemakers not sinners... who will divide assembly Church of Ephesus loved doctrine; and that was their drive, and why not?

This assembly had a historical record of 'great Bible teachers: Paul, Appolos, Timothy, and John himself;

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They know doctrine and aggressively learn doctrine And demand doctrine be taught. Doctrine was their occupation!

They judge by it, worship by it, separate on it's basis. Do you agree with us! if not...you are wrong and so we separate!

They made doctrine a 4th God: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit and God the doctrine. If this does disturb you, think about this. Biblical truth is designed to take you somewhere, to God, to a personal intimate fellowship with God --- doctrine is not designed to take you to itself, but to God!

This is much like the Jewish religious leaders worshiped the Law

Knowing law, doing law was what they believed!

If you keep Law- do the law then you are right with God.

As we will see this becomes their problem! They worship doc. Is doctrine important? Absolutely it is essential!

It is vital that we study Scripture, the truth! And if you do this in the Holy Spirit - it will take you to love, but the Church of Ephesus has no love. Therefore we know that while they were aggressive about doctrine, it was not truth! It was not in power of Holy Spirit! And you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false. This one is historically important and we do not have near enough time to deal with historical problems.

There is no such thing as 'apostolic succession.'

But this is a problem that started near the end of the 1st century. There are movements today that still claim apostolic succession Jehovah's Witnesses; Mormons, Roman Catholic Church, Camilites etc.

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One might ask what is the big deal about apostolic succession? The authority of apostles, who have authority over more than one local church. An apostle had authority over more than one church, but once the last of the 12 apostles died, that was it! More diagnosis that sounds good.

Revelation 2:3 and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary.

These believers have suffered for their doctrine and they have persevered in demanding doctrine and have endured a lot of opposition for His name's sake. And they have not grown weary in their allegiance to doctrinal purity.

We now come to Condemnation. This church looks so good, on the outside, looks like they are doing everything right but the kind of diagnosis that Jesus Christ does looks inside; eats correctly - vitamins, herbs, water, etc. but inside: an entirely different story! Colon, prostate, uterus, kidney, all these things; & of great importance: heart, brain - hidden trouble! So dangerous that death may be close... what is important here is, you don't even know you have a heart problem, you look good, but inside great danger, and you don't even know you have heart problem --- until physician tells you! And now the great physician tells them they have a major heart problem

This is the case with the church of Ephesus. Great outer diagnosis, but inside dangerously sick! Very very close to death!

**Revelation 2:4 'But I have this against you,
that you have left your first love.**

But uh ho, ever been to a doctor: everything is fine: but...

All the above diagnosis - overt - but inside, dead: you have left your first love: What happens when you have this love, and lose it

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No church is going to make it without spiritual love, in fact no individual is going to make it without spiritual love. For those who do not think this is all that severe, look at next verse 5:

Revelation 2:5 'Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place-- unless you repent.

Not having this love will destroy your spiritual life! You have left your first love: What is this love? How did they have it? How did they lose it?

Love comes from within, love is fruit of the Holy Spirit. When you are walking by faith in the Holy Spirit, He pours into your soul, this love, love for Jesus Christ, love for one another.

So what happened at this assembly in Ephesus?

Revelation 2:1 To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The one who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the one who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this:

You will recall that we have noted that each title of Jesus Christ is important to the condition of the assembly being discussed. Now what is important here?

Look at

Deuteronomy 23:14 "Since the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you and to defeat your enemies before you, therefore your

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camp must be holy; and He must not see anything indecent among you lest He turn away from you.

Note two purposes of the description of Lord-as He walks among them.

1. He walks among them to deliver them through suffering
2. And to defeat their enemies! And what is important here is that while He does not see anything major overtly, it is in the inside, the heart condition that offends Him! Another passage that explains why Jesus Christ is described as the one who walks among them, and related to their love;

Leviticus 26:12 'I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people.

For this reason we should love Him, for this reason we should desire to walk in Holy Spirit and receive the love toward the one who walks among us and who does the diagnosis.

Revelation 2:2 'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot endure evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false;

Revelation 2:3 and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary.

Looks good. But something vital is lacking. We studied diagnosis now condemnation of Church of Ephesus Church without love

Revelation 2:4 'But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

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This is very important. They did not lose this love. Their love did not grow cold, they left it. The Greek word is *a-phiemi*, deliberate action. It means to set it aside, quit or forsake this love, Why? Why would they, why would anyone do this? Because they did not think it was all that important. There was something more important. They set it aside for something they thought was more important than Spiritual Love.

They left Spiritual Love for doctrine - doctrine truth had to be more important than loving! Knowing doctrine, applying doctrine must be more important than love! Doctrine which, of course, is important but not in and of itself. Truth leads to love, truth leads to walking by Faith in the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 13:13 But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 8:1 Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.

1 Corinthians 8:2 If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know;

1 Corinthians 8:3 but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.

Knowledge of doctrine makes arrogant, it becomes standard to judge others, separate from others, sets you up an elite from others.

While Spiritual Love edifies, unites, bonds, and reveals Jesus Christ! His love! This principle here in diagnosis of the local assembly of believers is also true of individuals.

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Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

Life without love - non productive, no impact