



Citadel Of Faith Covenant Church

July 13, 2016



The conversation quickly shifts from the vision which John received in Chapter One of Revelation, to the conversation with the seven churches which commences in chapter two. As we recall, the first part of the Revelation of Jesus Christ was directed at the seven churches. The angel of the Lord requested that what John saw and heard, he would communicate with the seven churches of Asia Minor. Well we begin with the first of those seven churches, the church at Ephesus. There is actually a “format” which follows each of the ways in which the seven churches are addressed. 1) A characteristic unique to that church is mentioned, 2) next comes an evaluation of the church (starting with the good then moving to the bad), 3) Corrective action is outlined and then an admonition for there to be a serious and thoughtful consideration of what’s being said. (He that has ears, let him hear....).

Ephesus was the largest city of the Roman province of Asia. The inhabitants of Ephesus when the gospel reached them were more than 250,000 people. It’s location right on two major waterways (the Aegean Sea and the Cayster River not only made it a cosmopolitan city, but one of great commerce and trade not only for it’s waterways and harbor, but it’s trade routes made it a destination for tourists and merchants alike. The city boasted of a stadium, marketplace and 25,000 seat theater. The splendor of this city was notable. The city also had many religions. Most noted was the temple of Artemis (Diana in Latin). It was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was with this backdrop where the Ephesian church was born. In addition to visits from Paul and Appolos; it’s also believed that John had lived in Ephesus for a season.

Rev. 2:1 states that the instruction from the angel is to the angel (or messenger) of the church at Ephesus. It is believed that this term for angel or messenger is a reference to the Pastor or spiritual leader of Ephesus. The origin of the words given are from “the one who holds the seven stars in his hand” and walks among the golden lampstands. This is a reference to what we saw in chapter one. It is the resurrected Christ who holds the seven pastors in His hand and walks in the midst of the church. Jesus states that (vs. 2) I know your deeds (hard work and perseverance). He acknowledges that the Ephesian church had given themselves to hard work and to remaining perseverant. He then speaks about the structures which they set up to deal with error. They do not tolerate wicked people and have sought to weed out false apostles and teachers. Vs. 3 also lauds the fact that they have persevered and endured hardships for his name (this is obviously a reference to Christ.) And this church has not grown weary.



The deeper part of this conversation between Jesus and the church at Ephesus is that this is also true for the wider church of Jesus Christ. What a comfort it is to know that Jesus is observing us. Mark 12:41 shows Jesus sitting at the place where people would bring their financial gifts. And he watched how and what they gave. 2 Chronicles 16:9 speak of the eyes of the Lord going to and fro throughout the earth looking for those whose hearts are right before Him. The application, Jesus is watching and observing how we behave as His church and people. But notice the way he chooses to address the people. He chooses to begin his conversation with encouragement and commendation. No one wants to have someone begin a conversation without first being pleasant. For every challenge and things which need improvement, there is always something good to both see and say. There is another theme we can lift from this first few verses of chapter two. Socrates once stated, "The unexamined life is not worth living". This means that everything in life has to be examined to see if it's functioning as it should and that things are on track. When we first started Citadel of Faith, we would often refer to our regular meetings as "tapping the wheel". This is what we do when we drive our cars. We make ever so slight minor adjustments with our steering wheel to ensure that we stay on course. If we take our hands off the steering wheel for long, we will notice that we will slowly veer off the road. James 1:23 & 24, mention looking in a mirror and making adjustments based on what we see. The Word of God becomes that mirror that examines our conduct and life and then helps us to make the necessary adjustments before we "go public". Well, a culture which has no accountability, is one where there can be no true growth or adjustments. If you remember, it's the church at Ephesus which Paul admonished to allow every part to supply what is needed and speaking the truth in love to one another (Ephes. 4:16).

This leads us to the next observation in Rev. 2:4. Jesus has this issue with the church at Ephesus, they have forsaken their first love. Their love for Jesus AND one another had waxed cold and this was of great concern to Jesus. He then says in vs. 5 for them to "consider" how far they have fallen. What methods do you have personally to "consider" your life? What processes does the church have to "consider". We have to really evaluate our lives to make the necessary adjustment. Rev. 2:5 states to repent. Repent means to not just acknowledge, but to turn in the opposite direction. To make a 180 degree turn. Jesus shares for them to do the things they did at first. What was your early days with Christ like? What practices did you have when you first came to Christ? What was our church like in its infancy? Jesus then warns that if the Ephesians church does NOT repent, he will come and remove the lampstand from its place. It's the pure golden lampstand that allows us to hold the light and allow it to shine. Jesus will remove His presence and anointing from a person or church which chooses to not change and makes regular adjustments. Jesus then goes and affirms again that they hate the practices of the Nicolaitians. J.Vernon McGhee state that there are several possibilities about who the Nicolaitians might be. They could have been a priestly order who wanted to rule over the people. Other scholars say there is no reference to this historically. The third is that there was a man named Nicolaus of Antioch who formed a Gnostic cult which taught one had to indulge in sin in order to understand it. Regardless, the church in Ephesus hated their practices. Jesus then ends with a familiar ending for each of the seven churches, "whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches" (vs.7). James 1:22 reminds us to not be hearers only but doers. Finally, Jesus states a promise: to the one who is victorious, He will grant the right to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. (Remember the garden of Eden?...Well the paradise is not lost!!!