TO THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS

Revelation 2:4&5a “Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.”

Setting

Revelation 1:3 Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

Revelation 1:20b “The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.”

“Angels” translates *“angelos”* which means messenger, usually those we would call angels, but is also used of human messengers.

Luke 7:24a After John’s messengers left,

Luke 7:27 “This is the one about whom it is written: ‘I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’ “

The church is a lampstand. The light of a lamp comes, not from the burning of the wick, but from the burning of the oil, which is generally a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

Revelation 2:1a “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:”

This is a letter from the risen Christ to the church in Ephesus given to a messenger from that church to be delivered to the church. It is specifically for that church but has application to all churches and to all individuals. “Whoever has ears,”

Jesus Described

Revelation 2:1b “These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands.”

John 10:28 “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.”

Commendation

Revelation 2:2&3 “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. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name and have not grown weary.”

Good deeds: hard work, perseverance in hardship and not growing weary.

Galatians 6:9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

You cannot tolerate wicked people; you tested false apostles and found them false. Psalm 97:10a Let those who love the LORD hate evil,

Romans 12:9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

2 Corinthians 11:13 For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostle of Christ.

Revelation 2:20 “nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.”

Rebuke and Warning

Revelation 2:4&5 “Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.”

Questions: When, why and/or how did I lose the love I had at one time?

I John 4:16-17(NASB) We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world.

I John 4:18&19 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because He first loved us.

“Remove your lampstand” certainly means your light will no longer shine and probably means your church will cease to exist.

Further Commendation

Revelation 2:6 “But this you have in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.”

Revelation 2:15 “Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.”

Nicolaitans: According to historical sources, followers of Nicolas of Antioch who became a Gnostic. They focused on the acquisition of knowledge (*“gnosis”)*. They had their own “Scriptures,” usually ascribed to a follower of Jesus, but they were almost always a record of voices, not a recording of actual events. They made a sharp division between body and spirit, claiming the body was inherently evil. Their teaching led to the condoning of all sorts of sexual immorality.

The belief that the physical body was inherently evil led them to deny the incarnation. John is probably addressing Gnostic beliefs in I John chapter 4:1-3,

Dear friends, 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. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every Spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God.

Matthew 1:21 “She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

Whoever Has Ears

Revelation 2:7a “Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

This message is for anyone who will listen. Matthew 13:9 “Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

A Concluding Promise

Revelation 2:7b(NASB) “To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.”

I John 5:4&5(NASB) For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Revelation 22:1&2 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

Things to Remember

Hard work for Christ, perseverance for Christ and enduring hardship for Christ are all commendable.

Not tolerating wicked people and hating wicked practices is also commendable.

But those commendable things cannot make up for losing our love for Christ. A church composed of hard workers who have lost their love for Christ will not spread the light of the Gospel and will eventually die.

Wicked practices are justified by bad teaching. Bad teaching leads to wicked practices.

Those who have believed that Jesus is the Son of God who came in the flesh to save us from our sin are overcomers who will spend eternity with Him.