

REVELATION CHAPTERS 2-3 — 7 CHURCHES HOMILY

EPHESUS

Re.2:1-7

This church is like so many churches today. They work hard and endure patiently. They do not tolerate evil and expose false teaching. Many churches begin well with fire, glory, zeal, and love for God. They help many people, and continue to do things that are in line with God's Word. On the outside everything looks good. But...

The Lord has a complaint against them. They are dry and do not love the Lord and each other as they did at first. They do things right, but with the wrong intentions. Their actions are not the result of God's love.

This did not happen overnight. It happened slowly as they became people-centered instead of God-centered.

Structure instead of the Holy Spirit became their guide. They still do things for God, but the presence of Christ is rarely longer sensed. To love God and each other is the greatest commandment (Mk.12:30-31). You cannot impress God with your deeds if you do not love Him. The Lord tells them to turn back or have their lampstand removed from its place. Ask God to renew His love in us. All who overcome the attractions of the world and renew their love for Him are victorious and are promised to eat from the tree of life in the paradise of God (v.7).

SMYRNA

Re.2:8-11

We all have seen someone introduced in a church or on some show where a pastor is called "successful". But what is the standard for measuring success? We often consider success as having a large church, improving the finances of the church or bringing in a lot of people. If this is how we are to measure success, then the church of Smyrna was a failure. It was poor, persecuted and constantly oppressed. Some may say they lacked faith because of the problems they were enduring. These so-called successful churches could preach an "uplifting" sermon to call this "poor" church to be successful by their standards. But...

This is all backwards. The Lord called this so-called "poor" church "rich" (v.9). They are "rich" because of the poverty and persecution. Believers who go through suffering come out richer in that they are closer to God (see Re.1:9). Though suffering is caused by Satan, what it brings is priceless. This does not mean that we will only have suffering in this world. If a Christian leader asks for money in order to receive treasure from God, remember that the treasures of heaven are not sold by men! The Lord will determine who is a success or failure. That great judgment day will likely be a day of surprises for many. Those who remain faithful will receive the crown of life (v.10).

PERGAMUM

Re.2:12-17

This city was a center for a false god called Asclepius. It was considered a god of healing. People came from all over the world to this city for healing (v.13). There is a visible presence of Satan's activities here. These churches hold firm in the midst of Satan's activities. They do not give the enemy any foothold. But...

They are aware of the danger outside and are successful in dealing with them. But they have been tolerating false teachers in the church. They are undermining the church from the inside. They work like Balaam (2Pe.2:21; Jd.1:11). Balak hired Balaam to curse Israel (Nu.22-24). Though he was a prophet, his lust for the things of this world overcame him. Things look "normal" on the outward appearance but inside they are deceitful. They may appear to be worshipping God, but soon they spread their own "gospel" leading people into idolatry and materialism (Cl.3:5). Love for material things is idolatry. These "prosperity gospel preachers" appeal to the desires of the flesh while twisting the Word. Balaam blessed Israel in public, for God would not allow Israel to be cursed. However, he tricked Israel to worship idols (Nu.31:16). On the surface these false teachers appear to be messengers of God, but lead God's children astray (2Pe.2:17). Believers should stand against this influence, and not allow Satan to deceive you into thinking you are being judgmental.

THYATIRA

Re.2:18-29

The church of Thyatira was commended for their love, faith, patient endurance, and service. It was a growing church that is constantly improving. But...

They were allowing Jezebel to lead God's servants astray by encouraging them to worship idols, eat food offered to idols, and to commit sexual sins (v.20). This is more serious than what was happening at Pergamum. At Pergamum they were tolerating false teachers and ungodly people to influence believers into ungodly behavior. Here they were leading believers from fundamental truths of the Word of God. In their zeal to grow deeper in the Lord some fall for these teachers whose "deeper truths" are actually depths of Satan. That is, these deeper truths may seem to originate in the minds of these false teachers, but really are doctrines of Satan masked with Christian phraseology. John instructs them to not encourage these false teachers or have anything to do with them. Now for those who already are avoiding these false teachers, the Lord tells them to hold tightly to what they have until Christ comes.

SARDIS

Re.3:1-6

This church once had a reputation for being alive, but now is dead. The Holy Spirit is not manifest in their lives.

Their deeds are infested with sin. In this church the idea of alternative lifestyles would be tolerated. Homosexuality is discussed whether it is sin or not in spite of the clear Biblical teaching on this issue. Their ministers function more like politicians than servants of the Living God. They teach a "Jesus" who fits their theology by tolerating sin and not punishing sinners. Their deadness can be seen in that they get doctorates in theology without understanding anything about the Bible, or its author the Holy Spirit.

Their try to get people to come to their meetings by using innovative ideas and tolerant preaching. The Lord asks them to return to the message they first believed (v.3).

They are to return to the Lord. They should go back and see the sacrifices and trials the people made to start the church. Yet even in Sardis there are those who have not soiled their garments with evil deeds (v.4). Yes even among such deadness there are people who are alive and are serving God in a manner that pleases Him. God always has His remnant, even in a church like Sardis

PHILADELPHIA

Re.3:7-13

The Philadelphia church was commended for its obedience and perseverance even though it is said to have "little strength". From the outward appearance, it is not an appealing or spectacular church. But it is an obedient church.

This is the kind of church the Lord is looking for today: (1) a church that is committed to obeying His word in spite of consequences; (2) a church that is sincere, humble and meek; (3) a church that perseveres through accusations, slander and oppositions by NOT denying Him. Many churches define a successful church by the number of people that attend their service and the size of their church. When a church defines its strength on material things and human effort it misses the true power of the church, namely, the Holy Spirit. There is nothing wrong with human planning or material things. But to define a church by human ingenuity and temporal material things is to deny the fruit of the Holy Spirit. It is His fruit that we should gauge our churches by. This fruit is what God looks for in a church. It is eternal not temporal. We should train our eyes to see eternal things, that is, things related to His kingdom, then we will not look at temporal things like numbers and size. Our struggles, desire to obey, and character development are the kinds of things heavenly minded believers focus on. There is the exhortation to "hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown (v.11).

LAODICEA

Re.3:14-22

The church of Laodicea is known as the lukewarm church. What does it mean to be lukewarm? It is a mixture of hot and cold. Lukewarmness is the result of a mixture. Pastors today may instruct against this lukewarm attitude in believers. But again lukewarmness is the result, not the cause. So what is the cause? The cause is the mixing. Mixing of what? It is the mixing of spiritual and the material, holy and the unholy. The church is spiritual and is dependant on the Holy Spirit for its power. So any substitute for the Holy Spirit makes the church powerless or cold. This substitution does not come quickly, but slowly over time without too many noticing it. Instead of transforming the mind we desire to transform society. Instead of seeing the battle as spiritual we start to use the world's weapons and try to influence change. This does not mean these ministries do not do some good and strengthen some believers. They certainly may. But the only way to fight the evil one in this world is on our knees. Our fight is not against the seen world but against the unseen world (Ep.6:12; 1Jn.5:19; 2Co.4:4). This is why we are called to live as foreigners here on this earth (1Pe.1:17). We are in the world, but are not of the world (Jn.17:14-15). This letter is written to the church that thinks it can influence the world for Jesus with its money, influence, and worldly power. They are said to be poor though they may have worldly riches. This is not the riches and power of God. What this church should use is humility, love, patience, etc. The lukewarmness of mixing the world's way instead of the Holy Spirit's way is what God spews out. This church is so poor that the only thing it has is money and influence.

A homily is simply the application of the text. This study does not seek the prophetic implication, topical analysis, or involved word study to derive its meaning (hermeneutic). We simply want to understand how this text may apply to our lives. It must be noted that any homily involves a doctrinal view that influences how the application is applied. For example, under the Laodicea church section, those holding to the Dominion theology belief will differ in how they would apply this text. This homily is based on the pre-millennial understanding of Scripture.