

## The Letter to the Seven Churches of Asia: Ephesus

### I. Introduction:

- a. **(Rev 2:1-7)** “Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”
- b. The City of Ephesus
  - i. “The capital of proconsular Asia, which was the western part of Asia Minor. It was colonized principally from Athens. In the time of the Romans it bore the title of "the first and greatest metropolis of Asia." It was distinguished for the Temple of Diana (q.v.), who there had her chief shrine; and for its theatre, which was the largest in the world, capable of containing 50,000 spectators. It was, like all ancient theatres, open to the sky. Here were exhibited the fights of wild beasts and of men with beasts.” (Easton's Bible Dictionary)
  - ii. It has been reported that the city had a population of over 300,000 people
- c. The Church of Christ at Ephesus
  - i. At the close of Paul's second missionary
    1. **(Acts 18:18-21)** “And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow. And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not; But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.”
  - ii. Church established - **Acts 19**
  - iii. Paul writes to Timothy while Timothy was in located at Ephesus
    1. **(1 Tim 1:3-4)** “As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, Neither give heed to

fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.”

- a. We see from this letter that Timothy was successful in his commission to charge them not to teach any other doctrine.

## II. Divine Knowledge

- i. **(Rev 2:2)** “I know thy works...”
  1. Shows Jesus Omniscience
- ii. Jesus is in the midst of the candlesticks and he is aware of what goes on in His church
  1. **(Rev 2:1)** “These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.”
- iii. In the midst of the golden candlesticks reminds of:
  1. **(Matt 18:20)** “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”
  2. **(Matt 28:20)** “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

## III. The Condition of the Church at Ephesus

- a. **(Rev 2:2-3)** “I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.”
  - i. Labor and Patience – Toiling in their perseverance, endurance
    1. In the midst of Jewish and Pagan persecutors
    2. Ephesus was the site of the Temple of the goddess Diana in which Demetrius the silversmith proclaimed that “all Asia and the world worshippeth.” **(Acts 19:27)**
  - ii. In the midst of this persecution they continued not to bear them which are evil
    1. This is not speaking of the weak Christian – It is right for us to bear their burden
      - a. **(Rom 15:1-2)** “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.”
      - b. Must not turn our backs on the struggling Christian!
    2. Infirmities and weakness can be shared with tolerance, but never to the point of condoning false doctrine or upholding false teachers
      - a. **(Gal 2:4-5)** “And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave

place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.”

- b. **(2 John 10-11)** “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”
- iii. Stood up to and against false doctrine – Never fainted – Maintained the correct doctrine – Tried them that claimed authority and found them liars
  1. Paul warned the Ephesians:
    - a. **(Acts 20:29-31)** “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.”
    2. We too must stand up and protect ourselves from false doctrine and false teachers
      - a. **(1 John 4:1)** “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”
      - b. **(Matt 7:15-16)** “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?”
    3. Must toil as the Ephesian church did to keep doctrinal purity
      - a. **(Gal 1:6-9)** “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”
  - b. **(Rev 2:6)** “But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.”
    - i. We as children of God must hate the same things that Jesus hates
    - ii. Deeds of the Nicolaitans – Uncertain who or what they taught – one thing certain – their deeds were not what Jesus instructed in His word

- iii. If we want to abide with God, we must abide in His doctrine
        - 1. (2 John 9) “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.”
    - c. (Rev 2:4) “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”
    - d. Condition of the Church
      - i. Tirelessly toiled in a godless city
      - ii. Kept doctrinal purity
      - iii. Defended the gospel against false teachers
      - iv. Lost their ‘First Love’
- IV. First Love
- a. What is ‘First Love’
    - i. First – “πρωτος” “foremost (in time, place, order or importance)” – “original” – ‘original love’
    - ii. Love
      - 1. (John 14:21) “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.”
      - 2. (John 14:24) “He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.”
      - 3. (1 John 5:3) “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.”
      - 4. (1 John 3:17) “But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?”
  - b. Original Love” means “Original Work”
    - i. To remediate this problem Jesus said:
    - ii. (Rev 2:5) “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works”
      - 1. Love is not speaking of emotion – speaking a work
  - c. What does “Original or First Work” mean?
    - i. First work is the work in which one was originally created for
  - d. They were so caught up with fighting against false doctrine that they forgot their very purpose for being a Christian
    - i. They changed the purpose of being a Christian to being totally a fight against false doctrine
  - e. Teaching against false doctrine is a secondary work (not the first work) of Christianity
    - i. Not less important – must stand against false teaching and keep doctrinal purity
    - ii. False doctrine is around us because of True doctrine

1. If there would have been no truth, Satan wouldn't have created the lie
    - iii. Therefore since there is Christianity then there is Satan trying to destroy it from the inside with false teaching
  - f. So the teaching against false doctrine is a secondary job of the Christian
- V. The Christians' Original Work
- a. **(Eph 2:10)** "For we are his workmanship, **created** in Christ Jesus **unto good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."
    - i. This is your original and first purpose as a Christian
  - a. **(James 1:27)** "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."
    - i. True Christianity is pure religion, and it consists of two actions:
      1. Visitation
      2. Keeping unspotted
  - b. Visitation – Service
    - i. How can we give service to God?
      1. **(Acts 17:24-25)** "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;"
      2. God needs nothing from us but we are commanded to serve him
        - a. **(Matt 4:10)** "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."
      3. Jesus gives us the answer
        - a. **(Matt 25:34-43)** "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, **Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.** Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into

everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.”

- ii. That’s why James uses the example of visiting the orphans and widows – He’s speaking of service.
- c. ‘Keep himself unspotted from the world’
  - i. Righteousness
  - ii. Live our lives unspotted – Walk in the way of righteousness
    - 1. **(Rom 6:1-6)** “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were **baptized** into Jesus Christ were **baptized** into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should **walk in newness of life**. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the **body of sin** might be **destroyed**, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”