

October 28th, 2017

Pinecrest Baptist Church
a.m.

Sermon Series: What the Spirit Saith to the Churches
Sermon #2 Title: Our Beloved Jesus
Sermon #2 Text: (Revelation 2:1-7)

There is one thing for sure that ought to be sealed to the mind of every Christian. The Salvation that Jesus gives us, frees us from Condemnation, but not Evaluation.

~Never get the idea that once you are saved, that means God is finished judging you, or the Lord is finished watching you. Once we are saved, it is true, we will not be condemned by Jesus, but we will be confronted by Jesus.

- We are not going to our execution, but we will give an explanation.

- 2 Corinthians 5:10 – “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

*Note – Now that being said, just as we are evaluated individually, in Revelation 2 and 3, the Lord confronts us as an “assembly.”

Where the people are wrong, the Lord’s churches will be.

*Note – It is these two chapters that He confronts the seven churches in Asia that He identifies as Actually being His Church.

(As we learned last week, there were more assemblies in Asia, but when Christ wrote His letter, he only addressed it to those who were Actually His.)

*Note – The first church on the Lord’s list, is His church at Ephesus.

- Probably, there was no other church that had such a powerful, and dynamic beginning than the church at Ephesus.

To gain a quick history of the church, we turn to the book of Acts 19 –

When the Apostle Paul came to Ephesus preaching the gospel, he found a group of twelve men, who were disciples of John the Baptist – who had not yet been saved, not yet been baptized after their repentance.

When they repented and were Baptized, the Holy Spirit fell on these Gentiles, like He did on the Christian Jews on the day of Pentecost, and it turned the city upside down.

- For two years, Paul preached the gospel to that city

Vs 11-12 – “And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.”

- Supernatural acts by the demonic took place when seven sons of Sceva, ordered a devil out of a man, and the devil said, for all to hear – vs 15-16 – “And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and

prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.”

*Note – But now note what happened to the city when that happened . . .

Vs 17-20 – “And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.”

Repentance came to Ephesus!

- furthermore, the repentance was such that the entire industry of metallurgy, and the curious arts, revolted against Paul and this new church, because the ministry was putting them out of business!

- Acts 19 tells the rest of that story –

*Note – Nevertheless, this church was founded with great impact, and fanfare – insomuch that they brought down an industry built on sin . . . (now that was a powerful church.)

- Furthermore, from an outside the church walls perspective, this church was one of the most privileged in all history in their pastoral heritage . . .

- Founded possibly by Priscilla and Aquilla as Paul left them there in the book of Acts.

- but had enjoyed stellar pastors –
John and Timothy

*Note – Sometimes you’ll hear people talk about the Historic First Baptist Church of Dallas – pastored by George Truett, then WA Criswell.

- Or The Historic Bellevue Baptist Church of Memphis – Pastored by R.G. Lee, and then Adrian Rogers.

- Here you have the Historic church At Ephesus, having been pastored by John himself, and Timothy

Now fast forward 30 or so years.

Ephesus like all cities in Asia, ruled by Rome, in which Domitian is the Caesar.

- While he boomed the Roman economy, and secured Roman borders, as well as expanded the middle class, he began to wage war on all of his political enemies.

- He officially required the people of Roman Empire to address him as “Lord and god.”

- His anger was exacted on anyone who would not acknowledge the Roman state gods – even executing his own family for atheism because they rejected Roman religion.

- Ephesus was awarded the title of being a “Temple Warden” for the imperial temple, as the Temple of Artemis, where they worshipped the fertility goddess, Diana.

- In Ephesus, Rome had placed a Provincial Assembly of Prominent Citizens, whose purpose was to cultivate and enforce Emperor worship in all of the Asian province.

- In short, by our vernacular, they existed openly and publicly, but illegally, and without the protection of the state.

This is the church that the Lord has something to say to.

- Now I remind you that John is quoting the Lord Jesus, word for word – We are listening in on His evaluation of them. – But

in He tells us in verse 7 – “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

- In other words, it’s like Jesus saying, “You better listen in on to what I’m telling them.”

- Our circumstances may differ, but the truth is one size fits all!

I. The Presence He Reminds Them Of – “I know thy works”

*Note – The very first thing that Jesus calls their attention to is the fact that He has Perfect knowledge of their condition.

A. The Knowledge He Has

*Note - Knowledge of this will always do two things:

- It will **comfort** those who think the Lord has forgotten them.

- It will **concern** those who hope the Lord is ignoring them.

*Note – Something to note about this knowledge though – It is not a knowledge subject to imperfect perspective. It is full, accurate, and final.

James 1:17 gives us a testimony to the Light of God, as He lights up the truth – “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

*Note – Things often look different in different light, or turned different ways. From an earthly perspective, every pancake has two sides, and we can only see one side at a time.

- The knowledge that Jesus speaks of – is not a matter of perspective, is not a matter of shadows, and turnings, and lighting . . . the knowledge that Jesus speaks of IS, as THINGS, ARE, without regard to being

lit, well-lit, poorly lit, “He is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.”

*Note – Now in a court room, there are usually two sides to present their information to the Judge. There is the Prosecutor, and the Defense. They may say, “Your Honor, here is the information you need to know.” – The other side says the same thing. – With Jesus, there is no one telling Him anything about anyone’s side, because He Knows.

*Note – this is just a fact that every Christian must stay alert to. – Jesus said, “I KNOW thy works”

B. The Things He Sees

1.) “thy works” – (ergon)

a.) The toil and labors you have given yourself to.

(1) the idea here is one that encompasses your attention, your intentions.

*Note – Now Jesus knows:

1.) What we are Intending To Do

2.) What we are Actually Doing

3.) The actual value and virtue of both.

*Note – Before He Commends them or Confronts Them, He Reminds them of what they already know, they just need to know that they know.

II. The Practices He Commends Them For – “. . . 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.”

*Note – Now here is something to stand up and take notice of – the things that Jesus praised for the Ephesian church . . .

*Note – If there was ever a church from a preachers eye view that would seem like a dream come true, this would be it.

A. Their Steady Dedication – “thy labour and patience”

1.) Labour – “to toil with difficulty”

a.) Some tell us it means to toil to the point of exhaustion.

- It was not a physically easy life to be a part of the Ephesian church. – They did not serve without cost.

2.) Patience – “the word has the idea of enduring under trial.” – Wiersbe

-They were a people who would run out on the inside before they would be run off from the outside.

-They were giving everything they had – and Jesus said I see that, and I know that, and I acknowledge that dedication!

B. Their Serious Discernment – “thou canst not bear them that are evil: thou hast tried them which say they are apostles and are not hast found them liars.”

*Note – This people had a Bible and a Backbone. There was no go along to get along.

1.) There was zero tolerance for evil

2.) They had zero compromise for fellowship

*Note – There were those who said, “We are apostles too.”

- Now if there was anything Christians would surely need living under Domitian rule it would be “friends, fellowship, and unity with whoever identified themselves with us – wouldn’t it.” – Not according to the Ephesians.

3.) Look at their backbone for a minute – “They tried those who said they were Apostles.”

*Note – That word for tried there means to “Scrutinize” or “Test.” – No one would charm their way into a place of leadership or authority at Ephesus.

a.) “they were declared to be false liars”

*Note – In other word the Ephesian church didn’t keep their findings to themselves, they openly denied that these people were the Lord’s and identified them as liars.

C. Their Sacred Devotion – “for my name’s sake hast thou labored, and has not fainted.”

1.) Here is the reason they’ve done it all – “for the sake of the name of Jesus.”

- Domitian said to call him Lord and god.

- The Ephesian church declared, there is One Lord, and One God, and His name is Jesus.

*Note – Ephesus was a church sacrificing themselves on the inside, standing for the Lord on the outside, and were steady and loyal in the face of life-threatening dangers.

(Boy that should get them a trophy!)

III. The Problem He Confronts Them In – “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”

*Note – With all of those treasured accolades that Christians want Jesus to notice, He said there is one problem that overrides them all.

- “You have left your first love.”

- - He could not only see what they were doing – He saw why they were doing it....

- Everything they did, they did it out of Duty, they did it out of Devotion, they did it out of Doctrine – but they did not do it out of DESIRE for Jesus.

- They were given to “serve the cause” than the Christ!

Warren Wiersbe – “Just think of it: it is possible to serve, sacrifice, and suffer “for My name’s sake” and yet not really love Jesus Christ! The Ephesian believers were so busy maintaining their separation that they were neglecting adoration. Labor is no substitute for love; neither is purity a substitute for passion. The church must have both if it is to please Him.

I remind you that Paul taught us about Brother Sounding Brass, and Sister Tinkling Cymbal in 1st Corinthians 13:1-3
- “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.”

Our Lord confronts the Ephesians in their problem – “I love you, but the problem is you no longer LOVE me.”
- There is no desire For The LORD
- Living the Doctrine of the Lord Jesus, without loving the Lord Jesus of the Doctrine is as much a hypocrisy, as it is the other way around.

*Note – There is a verse the Bible is about, that all things center around it – “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever, believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”
- Without that promise, hell awaits every one of us.
But when People get that promise, it is to turned around!
- WE LOVE HIM, Because He first Loved US!

It is a fundamental abuse of the ministry to only to proclaim Jesus Loves you, but ignoring the result of that is that we are to LOVE Jesus!

When we listen to the modern day pulpits in the public eye, we hear everything about God Loving People – It is a People Centered Message . . . meaning . . .

- “The Lord loves you”
- “The Lord will fulfill you”
- “The Lord will protect you”
- “The Lord will free you to be you”

John MacArthur said one time – “Evangelical Christianity has all but lost this perspective on the Christian life. Most people have the idea that the Christian life is about how much God loves me and wants to fulfill my dreams and my desires and my ambitions and my goals and my objectives. And what he wants to do is make something wonderful out of me, and life me up, and elevate me, and fulfill all the hopes of my heart. It's more about God loving me so much that he wants to do all of this than it is about me loving him. – But in reality, the Christian life is about loving Christ. Is about loving him singularly. It is about loving him totally. It is about loving him sacrificially. It is about loving him obediently. It is about loving him worshipfully. It is about loving him in terms of service. It really is about loving Jesus Christ. That's what it means to be a Christian. It's that you now commit your life to loving him.”

- That being said, if your idea of Christianity is that The Lord Loves Us . . . and He likes it, when we do things for Him – you have no idea what Christianity is all about . . .

What is the Great Commandment?
“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”

That's the issue – it is as simple as this, and yet as profound as this . . . Nothing, and I mean nothing, and I mean nothing matters – if we do not LOVE Jesus, by His definition of love.

John 14:15 - “If ye love me, keep my commandments”

1 John 5:3 – “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.”

- This is loving Jesus –

Duty, Dedication, Devotion, and Obedience, -
BECAUSE You WANT To – not because you have to . . . Because you Love the Christ, not merely dedicated to the Cause.

*Note – Now how big a deal is that to the church? Surely this is a minor thing?

- None of those things – Dedication, Devotion, and Discernment “earn enough” to make up, or substitute for not actually loving the man who saved you.

IV. The Peril He Alerts Them To – “I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick.”

*Note – This is the possible result of continuing in their condition.

*Note – To “remove thy candlestick” is to put the church out of business, on His behalf.

- the word for candlestick, is the lampstand. It is not the light, but it is the bearer of the light.

- He said, “My light will not emanate from your church.”

- Now all right thinking Christians, realize that it is not The Lord's Privilege that we participate in His work . . . It is our Privilege to participate in the Lord's work, and it is such a privilege, no real church would dare want to live without it.

*Note – He would put them out of heaven's business . . .

*Note – WHY? – I know this . . . He didn't come and die on the cross out of duty, devotion, or discernment, He came because He loved you, and if He hadn't loved you, He wouldn't have died for you.

- LOVE was what moved Him to Die for Us

- it is to be actual LOVE that moves us to Live For Him.

- Where there is No ACTUAL LOVE for Jesus, there will be No ACTUAL LIGHT of Jesus, regardless of whatever else one may possess.

- It is the Love that puts the power in the Duty, Devotion, and Discernment.

V. The Promise He Leaves Them With – “except thou repent.”

- This was not the final sentence, this was just their current condition –and it was their time was running out.

Conclusion:

“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”

Now here is the final summary –

The Assembly may lose its work as a lampstand – but those “actual saints” those who are actually redeemed, will not lose their place in the paradise of God.

- Who are those that overcome? –1st John 5:4-5 – “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” – - It is a Belief that makes Jesus your Beloved.