



Empowering People to Change the World

**Ephesus:  
The Hardworking, Loveless Church**

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## **Ephesus-The Hardworking Loveless Church Revelation 2:1-7**

Each of the seven churches were real churches at the time of this writing:

- They are in the order of the postal route of Rome.
- They are distinguished in that they were in major metropolitan areas at the time.
- Each church represents a situation that is common to all churches and to all Christians for all time. Maybe you will recognize yourself in one of these descriptions.
- Christianity has no grandchildren. Every generation must be won to Christ. Just because we have had a Christian family, there are no guarantees. Our greatest responsibility as parents is to model and instill into our kids a love and passion for Jesus.

### **Vs. 1**

**“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write,  
‘These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who  
walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:**

- John is prostrate before the Lord and the Lord is speaking to him and his writing these things down.
- “Angelos” translated here “angel” can mean angel, but it is often used of human beings, messengers, pastors, disciples of Christ.
  - Matthew 11:10
  - Mark 1:2
  - Luke 7:24, 27
  - Luke 9:52
  - James 2:24
- So I believe John is writing these letters to the messengers, the pastors or elders of the 7 churches.

- It is interesting that there will be no mention of who the ruler of Rome was, how the elections have gone, which party is in power...but we do see Jesus showing us what is on His heart, what the center of His passions are-the Church, His Church!
- The most elegant and spiritual books ever written on the purpose and mysterious nature of the Church is in the letter by Paul to the church in Ephesus.
- The Ephesian church was quite famous... founded by Paul (Acts 19), pastored and led by Timothy, and it is believed was the residence of John before being exiled...

Ephesus is not the capital (Pergamum was) but the most prominent city in the Asian Province.

- Ephesus means “desire.” It had many good things going.
- But when God looks at them, He see’s something missing. The fuel, the first love, was starting to wane. This is a warning.
- Let’s see what Jesus says is good in a church and what needs to be fixed.

**Opens with many commendations...**

**2 “I know your works.”**

- “I know...” Hey He knows! God does know!

**“I know your works, your labor,”**

**“Labor”**, meaning, to the point of exhaustion...God appreciates workers! He really appreciates a church that really works hard for Him.

**“I know your patience”**

**“patience” under pressure.** Let me tell you the pressure these people were under.

## Domitian

- Emperor worship was enforced for the first time.
- Domitian called himself Zeus, the “king of kings and lord of lords.” No other emperor before him had made such an audacious statement, not even Nero.
- The Greek God, Zeus was given Mt Olympus in Greece, and Domitian’s university was 20x larger than Zeus’.
- Everyone was commanded to worship Domitian or be killed. The persecution began around 86 AD.
- What do you tell your people? What did John do for his church in Ephesus? What would Jesus do? Stay? Leave? Will God deliver us?
  - The entire Flotilla of the Roman Navy, the Praetorian Guard marching into Ephesus, cart with a 35 foot statue of Domitian, 24 priests of the great gods, the Emperor at the back. The choir is singing, “worthy are you Lord and God to receive glory and honor...”
  - A scroll from the pastor arrives. You read the story of the dragon being thrown into the sea...the beast...This was Domitian at that time!
  - Don’t give in!! That congregation wept! And they stayed and endured.
- Actually the church boomed during this persecution!! It probably tripled in just a few years.
- In 96AD Domitian had a vision, “tomorrow, tomorrow...” screamed! At noon the next day in Ephesus, an Ephesian philosopher, had a vision and started shouting “Blood, blood...I see his blood, the emperor has been killed.” Exactly at that day, at noon, Domitian was assassinated.
- The Roman Senate, declared Domitian as damned. Every temple and statue his name was erased of his name. Now, if the Romans thought he was that bad, think how bad it had been for the Christians.

- That is the context for the book of Revelation.

### **“you cannot bear those who are evil”**

- This is a church that has practiced church discipline.
- Three words necessary for church discipline: restore, remove, reconcile...how you apply them is:
  - If the sinner repents, you restore.
  - But you remove the person who causes division.
  - Proverbs 6:19, “The Lord hates...one who sows discord among brothers.”
  - And you reconcile with those whom you have a personal grievance with.
  - But we bungle everything up...we remove the sinner...restore the person who causes divisions, and we never reconcile with those we have grievances with.

### **“you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not and have found them liars”**

- Acts 20 Paul gathers the elders together at Miletus and warns them.
- Acts 20:29-31, “For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.” NKJV
- Ephesians 4 speaks of building the church up through the church leaders.
- If anyone comes to you and says they are an “apostle,” they are not an apostle...there were 12 and Paul and that was it!

There have been great leaders like Calvin and Luther who have been apostles to a particular period of time with a special mission, but not in this governmental sense.

**Vs.3**

**and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary."**

- Emphasizing the patience and perseverance of this church.
- They have endured persecution under Domitian! He is commending them.
- But then...nevertheless...

**Vs. 4**

**Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love.**

- Where is the romance gone? This is a house but we are not a home anymore!
- I mean all of the structures can be there: children's ministry, youth ministry, worship ministry...all the structure there, but what makes a house a home is the relationship within a home.
- Relationship...20x Paul speaks of love in the Ephesian letter.
- Matthew 22:35-40, "Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" 37 Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

**Vs. 5**

**Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.**

- Three things we must do to get back into a love relationship with God.
  1. **“remember”** be remembering constantly...this trust to the Ephesian was enormous! They had done well, but remember “where you have fallen.”
    - Remember the zeal.
    - Remember the answered prayer.
    - Remember the faith you had...how you trusted God!
    - Remember the boldness...now we want to bore people into the kingdom.
  2. **“repent”** This is a hard word but if the shoe fits, wear it.
    - It means to “change your mind.”
    - Stop worrying about everyone else, but stand in front of the spiritual mirror...remember the grace that has been extended to you.
  3. **“do the first works”** Do those first things again!
    - Evangelize! Talk about Jesus again.

**“I will come to you and remove your lampstand”**

- In other words you are going to lose your witness! You are going to lose your impact.
- Your church will not be a player anymore.
- You are going to run out of gas!

**Vs. 6**

**But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.**

- First time in the New Testament that Jesus says he hates something.
- Who are they? Some say that there was a Bishop named Nicol who promoted immorality.
- The key is the word “Nicolaitans” made up of two words, “nico” or nike, victorious, rule over, and “laity” which is the laity, the people of the church.
- I hate those who practice the “dominating of the laity”.

**“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”**

- Not the physical ear, but the ear of the heart.
- Hearing in order to obey is the meaning.
- This for all of us for all time.
- If you are a believer, if you have Christ reigning in your heart, you are an overcomer!
- 1 John 5:5, “Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”
- Revelation 12:11, “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.” NKJV
- We are overcomers!