

Text— Revelation 2:1-7

Fellow redeemed sinners, redeemed by the blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

Our Scripture selection is taken from the last book of the Holy Bible, which begins with the following words, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.” (Revelation 1:1-2)

Thus, it was the apostle John who penned the words of God which comprise the book of Revelation; and, the words written are certainly beneficial to all who pay attention to them, for John writes in Revelation 1:3-8, “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand. John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.”

Hence, it is evident that we Christians of the New Testament era are living in the last times, during which we await the visible return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who will judge the world. Accordingly, 2 Corinthians 5:10 informs us, “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.” Therefore, since we all need to be properly prepared to stand before Jesus’ judgment seat, let us:

“LEARN FROM THE LORD’S WORDS TO THE CHURCH AT EPHEBUS”

With that as our theme, may we, in view of our text and with the help of the Holy Ghost, see—

- 1) How the Lord’s words were given to the church at Ephesus
- 2) What the Lord’s words to the church at Ephesus consist of
- 3) Why it is important that we carefully consider the Lord’s words to the church at Ephesus

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Verse 1, ----- (Revelation 2:1)

The opening words of our sermon text inform us as to how the Lord’s words were given to the church at Ephesus. We observe that the apostle John was instructed exactly as to what words he was to write; and, it was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who so instructed John, for prior to our sermon text, we read in Revelation 1:9-20, “I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and

his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.”

Hence, John saw one who was like unto the Son of man that he had personally known during Jesus’ public ministry of some three years; but, this Son of man was now seen by John in dazzlingly bright glory, and John was so astounded that he fell at Jesus’ feet as dead. Nevertheless, Jesus laid His right hand upon John, told him to fear not, and assured John that He – the glorious Person he was beholding – is the ever-living, risen Lord, who walks among the seven churches mentioned to John by name. Realize also that Jesus informed John that the seven stars in His right hand were the seven angels – the seven messengers – of the aforementioned seven churches.

Therefore, the Lord’s words were given to the church at Ephesus by the Lord Jesus who had His apostle John pen those words to the angel – the messenger – of the church, the Christian congregation, at Ephesus. Now, the term angel usually refers to spirit-beings; nevertheless, it can also refer to men whom God has called as His messengers. Hence, in our sermon text, it is the pastor of the Christian congregation at Ephesus to whom John wrote words as Jesus instructed him, for the angels who are spirit-beings need no written letters since the Lord communicates

directly with them. Thus, the pastor of the church at Ephesus had the Lord’s words given to him in writing to share with his congregation, for the apostle John penned those exact words by the command of Jesus Christ.

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As we ponder the next several verses of our sermon text, let us see what the Lord’s words to the church at Ephesus consist of.

Verses 2 & 3, ----- (Revelation 2:2-3)

Ephesus was located in western Asia-Minor – modern day Turkey – and was famous for its pagan temple of Diana. Nevertheless, a Christian congregation sprung up in the city by the grace of God as He worked through His Word preached by various missionaries, including the apostle Paul. However, the Christians of Ephesus were surrounded by paganism and worldly-minded folks, just as Christians are so surrounded today.

Thankfully, the Lord Jesus had some words of commendation for the church at Ephesus, for He said in writing by the hand of the apostle John: *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.*

Note that Jesus complimented the Ephesian congregation for their practicing church-discipline by their trying teachers who came to them or arose among them. The congregation did not bear with the evil liars, but rather expelled them from the congregation. The church at Ephesus did what Titus 3:10-11 instructs all Christian congregations to do, that being, “A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.” The Ephesian congregation apparently took to heart the warning recorded in Acts 20:29-31, where the apostle Paul

declared to them, “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.”

My friends, the Lord warns each and every one of us in His Holy Word, 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.” Thus, it is every Christian’s responsibility to make sure he or she is taught ONLY that which the pure, preserved, WORD OF GOD – the Holy Bible – puts forth, rather than man’s own thoughts and opinions. Let us never forget that ALL LIARS are servants of Satan, children of the devil, for in John 8:44 Jesus once told the unbelieving Pharisees and company, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”

Notice that the Ephesian Christians were twice commended for their patience and laboring for Jesus’ name. Oh, those early Christians did NOT work to make a name for themselves, but rather worked to glorify Jesus’ precious name. Let us likewise heed the directives given in Colossians 3:16-17, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” Yes, faith in Jesus Christ, faith in His name, is to be the guiding principal as we strive to live in full accord with His Word.

We Christians are NOT to do as so many churches unfortunately do in our present day and age, that being, work to make a big name for themselves

rather than working to glorify Christ. Why, I’ve never seen so much credit-taking as goes on these days with churches praising themselves for all of the so-called “good things” they say they do for their community. Oh, its fine to help the needy with food and/or clothing; but, Jesus plainly states in Matthew 6:1-4, “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.” God grant that we strive to do our Lord’s will, patiently and regularly laboring for His name’s sake.

Observe that in verse three of our sermon text, the church at Ephesus was also commended for the fact that the congregation had *borne*, that is, had carried burdens. There are a number of ways in which Christians carry burdens. Jesus says in Luke 14:27, “whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.” Therefore, each and every Christian is to bear his or her own cross of suffering for the name of Jesus, by NOT compromising God’s truth. Additionally, Galatians 6:1-5 says, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden.” Thus, we are to lovingly attempt to correct a fellow Christian who has fallen into a particular sin, that he or she may repent and return to faith in Christ before who he or she will one day stand to be judged.

Verse 4, ----- (Revelation 2:4)

Jesus directed the apostle John to write words of warning also to the church at Ephesus, for it was Jesus who said to that congregation: *Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.* So, it's evident that the initial intensity and strength the congregation once held for the Lord Jesus Christ had grown weak as time went on— the first fervor they held had waned. Oh, they still loved the Lord Jesus, but their love was fading and could lead to eventual loss if they did not take heed and repent.

Fellow Christians, if we are honest we must all admit that our love for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, varies at times. We must ALL be on guard against growing cold and indifferent toward our Lord and His true Holy Word, for 1 Corinthians 10:12 warns, "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." If we begin to get on our high-horse of self-esteem, we can easily have our own love for the Lord Jesus grow weaker and weaker and fade away. Let us remember that 1 Peter 5:8-9 directs us, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

Verse 5, ----- (Revelation 2:5)

Because the Christian congregation at Ephesus had left its first love, Jesus warned them about it. The intensity of the love the congregation had for the Lord Jesus Christ had grown weaker and weaker as time passed, and their waning love was evidenced by the change Jesus beheld in their works, their fruits of faith. Hence, sincere repentance was required.

My friends, is there not a warning in Jesus' words for us Christians today? Sure there is! Perhaps we've fallen into skipping worship services or sleeping during such services, or not really praying but only saying the prayers and hymns during worship services. When such is the case, we need to sincerely repent, returning to doing the works

we once did when our faith was stronger. We ALL dwell in sinful flesh and need to regularly repent of our sins and amend our lives, for Ecclesiastes 7:20 plainly states, "there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." God grant that we truly value the faith we've been given— faith in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord, for, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Verse 6, ----- (Revelation 2:6)

Despite the church at Ephesus receiving some needed words of warning from the Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus had yet further words of commendation for those early Christians, as we just read.

The Nicolaitans were adherents of one named Nicolaus, who apparently headed a class of professing Christians who practiced fornication and other licentiousness under the guise of so-called Christian-liberty. Thankfully, the early Christians at Ephesus hated such falsehood, as also Jesus Christ who is Lord hated it. Sadly, there are folks today who call themselves Christians while they bless same-sex unions, or practice or condone other disgusting, disgraceful, heinously sinful sexual behaviors.

Nevertheless, note well that Jesus Christ HATES the sinful deeds promoted by false prophets and the like. Yes, not all hatred is wrong, for we read in Amos 5:15, "Hate the evil, and love the good." Therefore, let us take to heart what the Lord's words to the church at Ephesus consist of— both His words of commendation and His words of warning.

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As we ponder the remaining verse of our sermon text, let us see why it is important that we carefully consider the Lord's words to the church at Ephesus.

Verse 7, ----- (Revelation 2:7)

It is the Lord Jesus Christ who actually says: *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.*

Thus, it is the Holy Spirit who is speaking when Jesus Christ our Lord speaks, for the Holy Spirit is in fact Jesus' Spirit, who, together with Jesus and His heavenly Father, are but the one true God— the Triune God, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." (1 John 5:7)

Note well that it behooves every one of us to hear the words of our sermon text since they are GOD'S WORDS; and, there is a reward of grace given to ALL who hear – really take to heart – the words of the living God. Think about it: ALL those who by means of God's Word are true believers, will one day reside in the paradise of God: heaven! Yes, my friends, it is true, for we learn from 2 Timothy 3:15 that, "the holy scriptures... are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Oh, it's surely true since Romans 1:16-17 informs us, "the gospel of Christ... is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." Yeah, for John 3:16 states in no uncertain terms, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Let us therefore daily and sincerely repent of our sins; and, let us keep our full trust and confidence in Christ Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord, always endeavoring to be fruitful in that faith. Amen.

m.e.l.