**Revelation**

*Lesson 6 – Revelation 2:1-7*

1. The addresses to the 7 churches all follow the same basic pattern:
   1. Address – “to the angel of the church….write”
   2. Christ’s Self-designation – “the words of…..”
   3. Christ’s Commendation – “I know….” something positive about the church
   4. Christ’s Condemnation – “But I have this…..against you…..” something negative about the church
   5. Christ’s Promise or Threat – “I will….” or “remember….or else”
   6. Christ’s Exhortation – “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”
   7. Christ’s Promise – “to the one who conquers…..” something good Christ promises
2. “The triumphs, failures, and struggles of these churches are a kind of miniature catalogue of the sorts of things that we can expect to find in other churches throughout history.” –Vern Poythress

**The Church at Ephesus** **(2:1-7)**

1. Ephesus was wealthy, prosperous, and magnificent as a city. Ephesus was a major seaport city of the Roman province of Asia and was the center of the worship of the goddess Artemis [Diana]. It’s where the Temple of Artemis, one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world, was located. It’s harbor could accommodate the largest known ships at that time. It was the center of control of the magical arts that were widely practiced in Asia Minor. It was the location of the most important church of Asia.
2. Paul visited Ephesus on his way to Corinth in his second missionary trip. It was at Ephesus that Paul left Priscilla and Aquila and Apollos to teach. On his 3rd missionary trip, Paul stayed in Ephesus for 3 years preaching and teaching, and later Ephesus was the residence of the apostle John before his exile to Patmos.

*Address (v 1a)*

1. There is some debate as to whether the “angel of the church” refers to the pastor since the Greek word can simply mean “messenger” or whether it’s referring to an actual angel in the sense that each church has a guardian angel appointed by God over it.
2. Daniel 10:13,20 and Daniel 12:1 seem to indicate that God has appointed angels over nations. Matthew 18:10 may seem to indicate guardian angels at least over children and Acts 12:15 may also give support for this view that these are guardian angels over churches.
3. William Hendricksen, a now deceased Reformed minister and seminary professor, takes the view that these angels are ministers. He argues that it would be hard to deliver a letter written by human hand to a literal angel. The point being that even Reformed scholars disagree on this. It doesn’t affect interpretation at all.

*Christ’s Self-designation (v1b)*

1. Here we see reference to the 7 stars in the hands of Jesus and walking among the 7 golden lampstands again. This refers us back to Rev 1:20. For Ephesus, this would signify that by walking among the golden lampstands that Jesus is always in their midst and is keenly aware of their situation and how they are living. These stars are also in Christ’s right hand indicating the hand of power and majesty and they are in His hand indicating His control over the angels and Christ knows who the true angels are that belong to Him.

*Christ’s Commendation (vv2-3, 6)*

1. The first commendation is their good works, specifically the effort they expend to do their Christian duties and their patience in the face of opposition and persecution. They are trying to live faithfully in the midst of a pagan world.
2. In addition to toil and endurance, one of their works that is commended is their intolerance of evil within the church. The church cannot bear those who are evil. Apparently, some would-be apostles, some false teachers, tried to infiltrate the church at Ephesus but the church was able to root them out and kick them out. The testing of these would-be apostles was either their lives or their doctrine.
3. Paul had specifically warned the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28-32 about false wolves who would come into the church from the outside as well as men speaking twisted things arising from within the church.
4. Verse 6 - The church at Ephesus also hated the works of the Nicolaitans. We don’t know specifically what this group taught but scholars believe that whatever it was specifically, in general this group promoted compromise between Christianity and paganism.

*Christ’s Condemnation (v4)*

1. They have abandoned the love they had at first. Their love and Christian warmth has diminished to the point of being non-existent.
2. “She was no longer captivated and motivated by Christ’s love to surrender herself to Him and to magnify His name. Long since, she had slipped into the bad spiritual habit of going through the motions of church life, doing all the right things, but not for the right reasons.” –Joel Beeke
3. John Owen, a great Puritan writer, says that some leave their first love for Christ because they would think that abiding in Christ is “a plant that needs neither watering, manuring, nor pruning, but that which will thrive alone of itself.”
4. “We talk more about God than to God, more about church than about Christ, more about ‘religion’ or ‘spirituality’ than true Christianity. We still confess our sins and make solemn vows, but both are poses more than true piety.” –Joel Beeke
5. Matt 24:12-14 – “And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. **13**But the one who endures to the end will be saved. **14**And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

*Christ’s Promise/Threat (v5)*

1. 3 remedies that Christ gives to the church: remember, repent, and return
2. Remember that zeal and warmth you had when you were first converted. Some people may use the phrase “on fire for God.” Remember where you used to be and your love and zeal should have stayed there or even increased, but it hasn’t. Instead, it has decreased.
3. Repent and tell God that you are sorry and ask for forgiveness. Ask Him to return to you the zeal and love you once had. Ask Him to increase your love and work more of it within you. Jesus is in your midst. The access and the power and the help is available to you. But you must repent.
4. Return to the works you did at the first. Go back to witnessing to others about Jesus. Proclaim Christ everywhere you go and at every opportunity.
5. If you don’t, Christ will come and remove your lampstand from its place. This is Christ’s threatening promise. If you don’t remember, repent, and return, Christ will remove you as a light. Just as OT Israel was exiled because she failed in her mission as a light to the nations, she no longer witnessed and gave glory to God, so Christ will stop tending to a particular church that has fallen from her first love and Christ will let that church grow cold, fade, and die out.
6. “From our point of view, all may be well with our church, but the Lord Jesus knows better, for He sees the fatal flaw of sin that one day will bring us down.” –Joel Beeke

*Christ’s Exhortation (v7a)*

1. Notice the use of the plural. It says that the Spirit is saying this not only to Ephesus but to “the churches.” This message goes beyond Ephesus to all of these other churches that are being addressed and to our church and other churches today. We need to hear this message from the Spirit of Christ for us today.

*Christ’s Promise (v7b)*

1. The promise is to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God. We see this again in Revelation 22:2 in the New Jerusalem.
2. This is symbolic of eternal life and eternal communion with God in His very presence.
3. “With such promises of great reward, nothing should keep us from using all possible means to recover our first love, that we may overcome by faith and obtain the promised blessing.” –Joel Beeke
4. “The conqueror is the man who fights against sin, the devil, and his whole dominion and in his love for Christ perseveres to the very end.” –William Hendricksen

**Message for Us**

1. “Their [each church] faithfulness or laziness or complacency or tolerance of false doctrine is important to God, and makes a difference both in they should respond and how they are judged. We likewise need Christlike discernment, illumined by the Spirit and by these examples, if we are to evaluate our own church situation accurately and respond faithfully.” –Vern Poythress
2. Can God commend Trinity Reformed Presbyterian Church for her Christian duties? Are we expending our energy to practice Christian duties in obedience to God?
3. Ephesus was a church that was high on doctrine and short on love. We need to examine ourselves to see if we are the same.
4. William Hendricksen uses the illustration of a husband or wife who may still perform duties that come with marriage but at the same time be decreasing in love for their spouse. A spouse may take care of the children and prepare meals and other duties that come with being a wife and mother, but her love for her husband may wane and grow cold. “Similarly, a church member may be very regular in his attendance at the services but, in spite of that, may not be as devoted to the Lord as he formerly was.” –William Hendricksen