

May 4 & 5, 2024

A LETTER TO THE CHURCH

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Community Bible Church Sermon Discussion Questions: May 5, 2024 Pastor Ed Newton

Title: A Letter to the Church

Text: *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.* (Revelation 2:29)

Target: A Church that doesn't hear and obey the voice of the Holy Spirit will go from a mission to either a memorial or a museum.

Question #1: *How would you define the mission of the Church in your own words? How can we, as followers of Jesus, remain dedicated to the mission and guard against any influence that would cause us to drift? What role does community play in pursuing this mission?*

I. The Exaltation of Jesus over the Church: (Jesus Reigns)

- **Ephesus (Ownership):** *"holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands."* (2:1)
- **Smyrna (Qualified):** *"the first and the last, who died and came to life."* (2:8)
- **Pergamum (Truth):** *"The sharp two-edged sword."* (2:12)
- **Thyatira (Holy):** *"eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze."* (2:18)
- **Sardis (Sovereign):** *"seven spirits of God and the seven stars."* (3:1)
- **Philadelphia (Authority):** *"The true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens."* (3:7)
- **Laodicea (Sufficient):** *"The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation."* (3:14)

II. The Accusation of Jesus towards the Church: (Sin Replaces)

- **Ephesus (Left first Love):** *"But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first."* (2:4)
- **Pergamum (Worldly):** *"hold the teaching of Balaam...teaching of the Nicolaitians"* (2:14-15)
- **Thyatira (Tolerant):** *"tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols."* (2:20)
- **Sardis(Dead):** *"Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God."* (3:2)
- **Laodicea (Lukewarm):** *"I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot!" So, because you are lukewarm...I will spit you out of my mouth"* (3:15-16)

Question # 2: How do the accusations against the churches in Revelation resonate with issues we might face in modern church communities or our personal lives? What practical steps can we take to avoid the pitfalls mentioned in the accusations against the churches?

III. The Affirmation of Jesus about the Church: (Be Resilient)

- **Smyrna (Favored):** "I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan." (2:9)
- **Philadelphia (Perseverance):** "I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name." (3:8)

IV. The Invitation of Jesus towards the Church: (Get Right)

- **Ephesus (Renew):** "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first" (2:5)
- **Smyrna (Courage):** "Do not fear what you are about to suffer" (2:10)
- **Pergamum (Scripture):** "Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth." (2:16)
- **Thyatira (Purity):** "I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality...I will give to each of you according to your works" (2:21,23)
- **Sardis (Revived):** "Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you." (3:3)
- **Philadelphia (Stand):** "I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth" (3:10)
- **Laodicea (Depend):** "I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see." (3:18)

Question # 3: What does genuine repentance look like within a church community? How can we cultivate a culture of repentance and restoration in our group without allowing a foothold of shame and guilt to exist?

V. The Glorification of Jesus on the Church: (Jesus is the Reward)

- **Ephesus (Fellowship):** "I will grant to eat of the tree of life" (2:7)
- **Smyrna (Heaven):** "will not be hurt by the second death." (2:11)
- **Pergamum (Freedom):** "I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it." (2:17)
- **Thyatira (Honor):** "I will give authority over the nations," (2:26)
- **Sardis (Assurance):** "clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels." (3:5)
- **Philadelphia (Favor):** "I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God..."(3:12)
- **Laodicea (Victorious):** "I will grant him to sit with me on my throne" (3:21)

Question #4: As believers, we have incredible promises for our eternity with Jesus. *What do you look forward to most when reflecting on your secured destiny in Heaven?*

Takeaway: *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.” (3:20)*

Question #5: *In what specific ways can we individually and collectively respond to Jesus' call to hear His voice and open the door to Him daily? How can we put this into practice this week?*