

THE RIGHT KIND OF FAITH (FINAL WARNINGS TO THE CHURCHES)

When is the last time you have ever heard of or known of a church to REPENT? When is the last time you have ever known of a pastor or a group of elders leading a church in REPENTANCE? Very rarely have I ever heard of such a thing. Most people don't think that their church needs to REPENT. Most pastors do not think that they or their particular church needs to REPENT. Instead, they often DEFEND themselves.

And yet, when we examine Christ's message to the seven churches in the book of Revelation, REPENTANCE is a dominant theme. This really is Christ's last message to the church. Five out of the seven churches are plainly told to REPENT. Now everyone seems to think their church is the exception; but I wonder what the ratio would be today if Christ openly called the churches to REPENT. Undoubtedly the message of REPENTANCE applies to many churches and very probably to most.

Ephesus: Repent and do the first works, or else... (Rev. 2:5).

Pergamos: Repent, or else I will... (Rev. 2:16).

Thyatira: ...unless they repent of their deeds. (Rev. 2:22).

Sardis: Remember...hold fast and repent (Rev. 3:3).

Laodicea: Therefore be zealous and repent. (Rev. 3:19).

The only two churches in Revelation 2-3 that are NOT called upon to repent are the SUFFERING church undergoing severe persecution as found in Smyrna (cf. Rev. 2:8-11); and the EVANGELISTIC church (which has "*a little strength*") in Philadelphia (cf. Rev. 3:7-13).

The Church at **Ephesus** was a strong DOCTRINAL church, but it had lost its first LOVE. This was so serious that Christ said unless they repent He would remove their testimony (cf. Rev. 2:1-7). Love and truth are BOTH vital before Christ.

The Church at **Pergamos** did not take a strong stand of separation regarding false doctrine and sexual immorality. Christ demands that they repent, or He would come and personally fight against the offenders (cf. Rev. 2:12-17).

The Church at **Thyatira** allowed an ungodly teacher to influence and seduce people in the church regarding idolatrous immorality. Christ says if they don't repent He will kill the offenders with DEATH "*and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts.*" (cf. Rev. 2:18-29).

The Church at **Sardis** had a great reputation as a LIVING church, but in fact, they were DEAD. They are called upon to revive what little remains or else Christ in judgment would SUDDENLY come upon them unexpectedly as a thief (cf. Rev. 3:1-6).

The Church at **Laodicea** is the totally apostate church. It is the church that makes Christ sick. The church as a whole is gone, but Christ still appeals to individuals within the group to respond to His invitation (cf. Rev. 3:14-22).

In the case of each individual church, the message concludes by saying, "*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*" (cf. Rev. 2:7; 11; 17; 29; 3:6; 13; 22). The individual churches as a single unit were accountable, and yet each individual within those churches was also accountable for Christ's message to the church. And then all the churches were also accountable for the message.

"Our Lord's last word to the church was not the Great Commission, but a plea for repentance." – **Vance Havner**

In Revelation 2-3 as Christ addresses the churches note the recurring phrase at the end of His messages: "***He that hath an ear, let him hear...***". In the gospels, Christ repeatedly stated this formula as a serious warning regarding the issues of salvation (cf. Matt. 11:15; 13:9, 43).

In Revelation 2-3 it is a general statement related to all that Christ is saying which has a broad application to all the constituents in the churches. In the churches, there were true believers who needed to get right, but as in churches generally there were undoubtedly those who had an association with the church but were not truly saved (cf. 2 Cor. 6:1-2, 13:5).

For example, Christ tells the church at Pergamos that they have there those "who hold the doctrine of Balaam" and "those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans" which Christ hates (Rev. 2:14-15). These people in association with the church were very possibly not even saved. As such,

both professors and possessors (all having an association with the church) were to make the appropriate application of His WARNING message (cf. Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).