

## Revelation 2:1-7

## THE CHURCH OF EPHESUS

## Part 3

## THE MESSAGE

“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 has borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. . . But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate” (2:2-3, 6).

In each of the seven churches the phrase “I know thy works” can be found. The word know speaks of knowledge that is complete. You and I have limited knowledge; however, the Lord of the church has complete knowledge. Knowledge so complete, that He can speak with absolute accuracy and authority.

He makes no mistakes in His assessments. He knows both the good and the bad in each church.

The Ephesians were to be commended for what they were doing right. Verse 2 begins this process by saying, “I know thy works.” The word works is a word that means deeds, which is a general term that summarizes itself in all that follows in verses 2, 3, and 6.

Christ first commends the Ephesian Christians in verse 2 by stating, I know “thy labour.” The word labour means toil. It pictures someone working to the point of sweat and exhaustion. The Ephesian Christians gave an all-out effort – physically, mentally and emotionally. They toiled in evangelizing the lost, building up the saints, and caring for those in need.

Look again in verse 2 where it says, I know “thy patience.” The Ephesians showed great perseverance in trying circumstances.

Teachers of the Greek language and those who are artful in the use of synonyms, tell us, that this phrase generally emphasizes patience with people. In other words, the Ephesian Christians, despite their difficult circumstances (hardships, sufferings, and loss), were longsuffering with people. They were still holding to the teaching of Paul thirty years prior to these words in verse 2.

Paul said to this church thirty years before verse 2, “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:1-3).

For thirty years the Ephesian church had practiced patience with people, and they were still practicing it when John penned Revelation.

Again in verse 2 it says, I know “how thou canst not bear them which are evil.” The Ephesian Christians refused to tolerate evil men. Undoubtedly, they held to a high and holy standard of behavior. They were sensitive to sin – sin that violated scriptural principles.

Verse 2 also tell us that they had “tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.” The Ephesian church had spiritual discernment – they knew the scriptures.

When Paul established the church, he declared unto them all the counsel of God, he left nothing out. He built doctrinal fortitude into them. On his departure he called the Ephesian elders together and warned them. He said, “I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this [I am convinced of this], that after my departing shall grievous wolves [savage false teachers] 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. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:27-32).

The Ephesians never forgot Paul’s words. They were still on their guard concerning false doctrine, and false teachers in Revelation chapter 2.

Through all the hardships, trials, and difficulties that the Ephesians had been through, Jesus said in verse 3, I know thou “hast borne [tolerated, put up with], and hast patience [perseverance], and hast not fainted [grown weary or given up].”

Jesus had complete knowledge that this church was doing everything for His glory, and they had done so without having grown weary. They had not given in to criticism, hardships, and disappointments – they had stayed the course.

Furthermore, He adds in verse 6, “But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.” The Nicolaitanes cannot be positively identified. However, their teachings were false and hated by the Ephesian church. But, when we read the message to Pergamum, we see that the church in Pergamos tolerated their teachings. The church of the Ephesians would not compromise, but the church in Pergamos did compromise. When we study the church in Pergamos we will look closer at the deeds of the Nicolaitanes.

By: Jerry W. Arnold

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