



Growing into Church Discipline Pt 9: “I Have a Few Things Against Thee!”

Discipline in the Seven Churches of Revelation

September 3, 2023

Holy Text: Revelation 1:1-20

First, let us Praise Him!

- **Praises to Jesus Christ** our LORD for loving His churches and sending them His Word! (v.1)
- **Praises to Jesus Christ** for His testimony! (v.2)
- **Praises to Jesus Christ** for the blessings of reading, hearing, and keeping the Word of God! (v.3)
- **Praises to Jesus Christ**, who IS, and WAS, and IS TO COME! (v.4)
- **Praises to Jesus Christ**, for He is “the faithful witness,” “the first begotten of the dead,” and “the prince of the kings of the earth” for “loving us” and “washing us from our sins in HIS OWN BLOOD!” (v.5) Hallelujah!
- **Praises to Jesus Christ**, Who “hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” (v.6)
- **Praises to Jesus Christ**, Who “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.” (v.7)
- **Praises to Jesus Christ**, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending! (v.8)

Psalms 148:1-14 (KJV) *Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights. 2 Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts. 3 Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. 4 Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. 5 Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created. 6 He hath also stablished them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass. 7 Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps: 8 Fire, and hail; snow, and vapour; stormy wind fulfilling his word: 9 Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars: 10 Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl: 11 Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: 12 Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children: 13 Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven. 14 He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the LORD.*

Review:

In Part 6 (*A Sinning Brother, Lying in Church, and the Fear of God*), when we read Rev 1:9-20, we learned that:

1. Christ is the Alpha and Omega...First and Last. This is a statement concerning His supreme authority. (vv.11, 17)
2. Christ knows and cares about His churches. He knows them by name. (v.11)
3. Christ holds the *angels of the churches*¹ in His right hand, and a sharp two-edged sword flows from His mouth. (vv. 16, 20)

¹ Each church was addressed through their “angel,” a word that can mean an angelic being but can also mean “a messenger.” Since angelic beings do not lead the church nor can they ensure the sort of correction the LORD insists upon in these chapters, I agree with John MacArthur, John Gill, Matthew Henry and others that the “angel” in question would be the “pastor” or most prominent elder.

4. Christ dwells in the midst of the churches (seven candlesticks, vv.13, 20)! He sees all, knows all, and cares about all that occurs!
5. Christ is (and must be) glorious in the midst of His churches! (v.16) This is best demonstrated by a loving, obedient church.

In Part 8 (*Shunning, False Teachers, and Leadership Accountability*), we gleaned that:

1. Christ sees all within His churches.
2. Christ cares about the purity of His church.
3. Christ's sheep should condemn rather than celebrate sin.
4. Christ, through the apostles and their doctrine, calls for, at times, correction, shunning, and excommunication due to false doctrine and unrepentant sin.
5. Christ's goals in discipline are His own glory and His people's redemption and reconciliation.

All these things will be evident as we read and heed our LORD's instructions to the seven churches. Revelation is a letter written to real churches. They had real pastor, real congregations, and real problems. Whatever else it is, Revelation was meant to strengthen seven historical churches to stand firm, resist sin and error, and hold fast, and through them, the Church for all time.



The Seven Churches

Encouragement and Correction for Ephesus (Rev 2:1-7)

1. Christ's Restatement of His Authority (v.1)
2. Christ's Encouragement: Christ praised their hard work, not bearing them that are evil or false teachers, patience, and endurance for His Name's sake, even hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans. (vv.2-3, 8)
3. Christ's Correction: Leaving their first love...that is, sound doctrine without passionate devotion. (v.4)

To be a Christian is to love the Lord Jesus Christ. But the Ephesians' passion and fervor for Christ had become cold, mechanical orthodoxy. Their doctrinal and moral purity, their undiminished zeal for the truth, and their disciplined service were no substitute for the love for Christ they had forsaken. - John MacArthur

4. Reformation/Application for Christ's Church (v.5): Remember, repent, and do the first works again. Recapture our zeal and hunger for the LORD! This means so much to Him, that He threatened their candlestick!

Encouragement for Smyrna (Rev 2:8-11)

1. Christ's Restatement of His Authority (v.8)

2. Christ's Encouragement: No rebuke for Smyrna. Christ praises their hard Kingdom work, even in the midst of tribulation; standing against the "synagogue of Satan." (v.9)
3. Reformation/Application for Christ's Church (v.10): Be fearless in the face of persecution; be faithful unto death...Christ will give a crown of life!

Encouragement and Correction for Pergamum (Rev 2:12-17)

1. Christ's Restatement of His Authority (v.12)
2. Christ's Encouragement: Christ knew of their Kingdom work, even holding fast to His name in an environment of satanic influence (likely, emperor worship). Jesus even names faithful Antipas, who died for the Gospel! (v.13)
3. Christ's Correction: There were those in the church that used deception to promote sexual immorality (doctrine of Balaam). (vv.14-15)
4. Reformation/Application for Christ's Church: Repent of all such things! There should be no toleration of such wickedness in the Church of our LORD. Let us be holy! Christ threatened to come and fight against them with the sword of His mouth if they didn't repent! (v.16)

Encouragement and Correction for Thyatira (Rev 2:18-29)

1. Christ's Restatement of His Authority (v.18)
2. Christ's Encouragement: Christ praises their works, love, service, faith, and their improvement in these things. (v.19)
3. Christ's Correction: Acceptance of "that woman Jezebel" (a false prophetess) within the church! Jezebel (her story runs from 1 Kings 16 - 2 Kings 9) is widely acknowledged to be the most evil woman in the Bible, maybe only eclipsed by her daughter, Athaliah (2 Kings 11). She was so bad that even today her name is considered an insult. There is a debate whether Jesus was referring to an actual woman named Jezebel who was a member of this church, a woman of another name who simply acted like the OT Jezebel, or something spiritual: the "spirit of Jezebel." All the options are bad! **The point: no church should want anything to do with anything that looks, sounds, acts, teaches, or influences like Jezebel did. (v.20)** She was:

- A pagan/unbeliever
- Manipulative/seducing
- Immoral and licentious
- Domineering
- Immodest
- Brutal
- An enemy of God's Word (she hated the prophets)

4. Reformation/Application for Christ's Church: In great mercy, Jesus gave her space to repent, but she refused! (v.21) Jesus would cast her into a sick bed, those that follow her into tribulation unless they repent, and kill her children with death! (vv.22-23) **The church must never follow such doctrine! We must hold fast until the coming of the LORD!** Our LORD promises power over nations and the "morning star" to those who overcome and keep His works! (vv.24-28)

Encouragement and Correction for Sardis (Rev 3:1-6)

1. Christ's Restatement of His Authority (v.3:1)
2. Christ's Encouragement: "Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain." (v.2)

3. Christ's Correction: "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead!" "I have not found thy works perfect before God." (vv.1b-2b) The church at Sardis is said to appear as if they are living, but is dead. **What a terrible rebuke!** Apparently, they had a reputation for life and spiritual vitality. Although we are not given the specific (but imperfect) works, for Sardis to have a good reputation, good "church stuff" must have been going on. Perhaps they had a strong membership, or gave to the community, or sang really well, or preached really good! It may be that all these things were going on, but their hearts still weren't tender before the LORD.
4. Reformation/Application for Christ's Church: Never settle into a spiritual routine! Don't go through the motions! Remember the Gospel, hold fast, and repent! (v.3) **Oh the great need for humble and truthful hearts before Him!**

Encouragement for Philadelphia (Rev 3:7-13)

1. Christ's Restatement of His Authority (v.7)
2. Christ's Encouragement: No rebuke for Philadelphia. Even though a "synagogue of Satan" was in their midst (v.9), Christ says:

Revelation 3:8 (KJV) I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

3. Reformation/Application for Christ's Church: May we patiently endure like the saints at Philadelphia:

Revelation 3:10-12 (KJV) Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. 11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. 12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

Correction for Laodicea (Rev 3:14-22)

1. Christ's Restatement of His Authority (v.14)
2. Christ's Encouragement: **None! Jesus had NOTHING good to say!**
Revelation 3:15-16 (KJV) I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.
3. Christ's Correction: Pick a side! Stand up! This was the lukewarm church: tepid, casual, half-hearted, unenthusiastic, indifferent. They were apathetic, cool, disinterested, and moderate. In modern cultural terms, they were "accepting, non-judgmental, open, and unbiased!" They lacked fervor. They weren't willing to take and stand and live with the consequences. This sort of weak, limp-wristed faith is anathema to Jesus! They were also deceived into thinking that they were "rich" and needed nothing! (v.17)
4. Reformation/Application for Christ's Church: **Take...a...Stand!** Go to Jesus and be clothed in white raiment from Him alone! Be Him to open our eyes! (v.18) Also, know that **His rebuke comes from love and is filled with divine purpose: intimacy with Jesus and heavenly blessing:**

Revelation 3:19-21 (KJV) *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. 21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*

Closing Thoughts:

Even though our LORD, out of love, directly corrected His church, sadly, some will hear and some will not:

Ephesus: Revelation 2:7 (KJV) *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.*

Smyrna: Revelation 2:11 (KJV) *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.*

Pergamum: Revelation 2:17 (KJV) *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 hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.*

Thyatira: Revelation 2:29 (KJV) *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

Sardis: Revelation 3:6 (KJV) *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

Philadelphia: Revelation 3:13 (KJV) *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

Laodicea: Revelation 3:20-22 (KJV) *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. 21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. 22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

This is still true today. Some in the church hear His Words, and some do not. May we all have ears to hear, repent, and follow Him with all our hearts.

Amen.