

The Message - to the 7 Churches

Introduction

Revelation chapters 2 & 3.

In my writings, the word "Church" represent all Churches, organizations, ministries and groups that serve God. It does not mean any particular Church or denomination. It is used as a generic term.

Nearly 2000 years ago the Spirit of the Lord instructed the Apostle John to write seven messages to seven Churches which were located in what is today's modern Turkey. The messages that were written to these seven ancient churches is the same message the spirit is giving to the churches today. This is the message the body of Christ needs to hear. Seven always symbolizes wholeness. Today, the seven churches mean the whole Body of Christ, which include all churches.

By Church I mean any group of people who come together in the name of Jesus, to worship and serve him alone. Any group or church that adds someone else along with Jesus to be worshipped or pray to anyone else other than God the Father through Jesus the Son, are not considered as "Church". They are effectively out of the Body of Christ.

This message is as relevant to individual believers as it is to Churches.

Church in Ephesus

Revelation 2:1-7

The Church in Ephesus represents many churches today. They worked hard and endured patiently. They did not tolerate evil people and exposed false apostles. They did many things right . They also hated the works of immoral Nicolaitans just like the Lord did (*The Nicolaitans were believers who compromised their faith in order to enjoy some of the sinful practices of Ephesian society*).

Many churches that exist today began well. They did many things that please God. They helped many people grow in the Lord. They stood steadfast against all oppositions and had endured. They fought for the poor and oppressed. They helped and blessed many poor people. They still do all those things. Their actions are in line with God's Word. Everything on the surface looks good. All their actions are right.

BUT...

The Lord tells them that He has a complaint against them. This is the complaint, (verse 4) "YOU DO NOT LOVE ME OR EACH OTHER AS YOU DID AT FIRST". This is the condition of many churches today. This is the church that does all things right, but with wrong intentions. Their actions are right, but their actions are not as a result of God's love.

They began well, but as time went by, love for God has slowly eroded in these churches. It did not happen overnight, but slowly and steadily. As activities increased, the focus slowly shifted from God to the activities. All activities became people centered instead of God centered. Structures that were brought in initially to regularize activities have

become the guiding force instead of the Spirit of God. They slowly detached themselves from the head, Christ. Before long, all that remains of them are the structures, with all the substance gone. They have lost the love for God which they had in the beginning. They still do many things for God while Jesus and His presence are ignored in many of them.

The Body of Christ is littered with structures like this without meaningful substance these last days. Many of them started with such glory, fire and zeal. But today all that exists is the structure. Love for God is long gone. As a result, they also lost love for one another. These are churches filled with bitterness towards each other and internal squabbles. But they put up a pretty picture for public consumption. From outside everything may seem alright, but only God knows what is inside. God's love, which is the main unifying force, is missing in them.

Now all their actions are a result of habits and are done in routine, with no inspiration or guidance from Jesus who is the head. They have cut themselves off from the head by ignoring Jesus. Their initial love, zeal and enthusiasm in loving God is not there anymore. It is heart breaking to see these churches that have lost God's love. They are like huge machines without oil. A machine without lubrication can run for some time. But it will be very inefficient and eventually it will completely break down.

The Lord tells them *"Turn back to me and work as you did before. If you don't, I will come and remove the lamp stand from its place among the churches"* (verse 5). This is a very strong warning to the Ephesus church. Turn back or I will remove you. Maybe you are wondering why God is so hard on this church.

But, this will be the consequence of a church that is dry without God's love. Love is what keeps us together. To love God and to Love men is the greatest commandment given to believers (Mark 12:30, 31). God expects us to live by His commandments. It doesn't matter how sacrificial or selfless your action is, if you do it without love for God or love for men in your heart, it is nothing (I Corin. 13:1-3).

This is the message to all the churches that function without God's love, or love for one another.

Turn back to God; renew your love for Him. Start afresh by going to His presence in fasting and prayer and ask Him to renew His love in your lives. Ask Him for a heart filled with love for God and love for one another. Do not think that you can impress God by your deeds or actions without loving Him or loving one another. God sees the depth of your heart. You can impress men with your deeds, which is visible on the outside. But God sees the lack of love in you that lie deep in your heart. The message is simple, Turn back or be prepared to be removed.

When the Lord says He will remove, He means it. They will effectively be removed from their place among the other churches (verse 5), if they do not renew their first love. These churches may exist with a registration with the government of this world, but their registration in the Lord's book will be cancelled.

Before the Lord comes He will remove all the Churches that do not love Him or one another. Remember, Jesus is not coming back for a bride who does not love Him. He is coming to take home His bride who loves Him wholeheartedly. Ask yourself how strong is your love for Him?

Finally, He says everyone who is victorious will eat from the tree of life in the paradise of God (verse.7). There is a reward of eternal life and a life of intimacy with God to the ones who are victorious. All those who overcome the attractions of the world and who renew their love for Him will be victorious.

Church in Smyrna

Revelation 2: 8 - 11

I saw a Christian TV program recently in which the host introduced a pastor like this... "This is so and so and he is a successful pastor in such and such place". I was uncomfortable to hear the word "successful". I don't know what measuring scale was used to measure his success. The host said that this pastor was successful because he has built a huge church building, has improved the finances of the church by raising more money and has managed to bring in more people to the church. There is nothing wrong in doing all the things this pastor did. But, can you call a person successful for doing these things? Is this how success is measured in the kingdom of God? What does success mean in the kingdom of God?

If this is how success is measured, then the church in Smyrna would be considered a spectacular failure. It is poor, persecuted and constantly being opposed. Today's prosperity preachers would look down and sneer at a church like this for its "lack of faith". They would give an "Uplifting sermon" in their designer suits on how to "come out" and be "successful". But Jesus calls this church rich (verse 9). I thank God for churches like this, even though there may not be many churches like this today.

Why does God call this church rich? Is it because of the poverty and the persecution? Does it mean that you have to be poor and miserable in God's kingdom to be rich? No. The reason is, that this church had the amazing ability to endure the poverty, pain and suffering. The character and endurance that this church developed as it went through the hard times made this church rich.

Any believer who has been through suffering will come out of it rich. I have heard many Christians testify that the hard times that they went through, however painful it was, has always resulted in helping them come closer to God, purified them and has made them rich in spiritual things. I can also testify the same thing. All the suffering, the humiliation and disappointments that I went through, always brought me closer to the Lord. It brought out much garbage and filth that I had in me, but did not know was there. I can say that the suffering made me rich in the Lord.

Even though suffering is caused by the devil, what it brings out of a Christian is priceless. It is this priceless treasure that made the church in Smyrna rich. If you want to grow more in the love of God and want more treasure of the kingdom of God, this is the only way to get it. No one can get the riches of heaven on this earth without going through what the church in Smyrna went through.

Do not let any of these "Million dollars" evangelists deceive into thinking that you can get the treasures of heaven by sending them offering. This is pure deception straight from hell. This is a deception that has infiltrated the body of Christ these days. You cannot get these treasures by someone praying for you. You should get it yourself from the Lord, by His way. Treasures of heaven are not sold by men!

John as he writes these messages, starts the letter like this *"I am John, your brother. In Jesus we are partners in suffering and in the Kingdom and in patient endurance"* (Rev. 1:9). Remember, we are partners in suffering. Hebrews 5:8 says *"Jesus had to suffer to learn obedience"*. Even the son of God who had no sin in Him had to learn some things, and the only way He learned it is, through suffering. I am not saying that we will have only suffering in this world. All I am saying is, that the treasures of heaven can be had only through suffering and we should not be afraid to go through pain and suffering because the

Lord has promised to be with us no matter what we go through.

No amount of pain or suffering can shake a child of God. That is how we are different from the people of this world. When they suffer, it breaks them and they remain broken. But when we suffer, we are broken and God builds us again and we become much stronger in Him. No matter what we go through, our Lord Jesus will give us the strength and He will never leave us. And as we come out of the suffering we will emerge purified and rich.

When you go through all the hard times in this world, and still persevere and remain faithful till the end, then you will be a Successful Christian, a Successful Church and a Successful pastor. This is called success in the Kingdom of God. In God's kingdom, success is not how much money you have or how big your church is or how many people go to your church.

Whether someone is successful or not will be known only the day the Lord comes or the day they die, whichever comes first. Many who started off well did not finish the race. Judas, Saul and many others started the Christian race well, but they ended as failures. But the thief on the cross along with Jesus, started and ran a failure, but he ended the race a success. It is the one who perseveres to the end who will be victorious.

The result of a race will be known only at the finish, not while the race is on. Never conclude anything when the race is on. Wait till the end. In the end, the Lord will determine who is a success and who is a failure. That day will be a day of surprises for many.

This is the message, if you are going through pain and suffering, remember that this is not something strange. The Lord has allowed it. He will help you come out of it in glory and not in shame. This is what the Lord says:

"Remain faithful even facing death, and I will give you the crown of life" (verse 10).

Church in Pergamum

Revelation 2:12 - 17

Pergamum was a sophisticated city, a center of Greek culture and education, with a 200,000-volume library. It was also a center of four cults. It was a city filled with idolatry. The city's chief god Asclepius whose symbol was a serpent and was considered a god of healing. People from all over the world came to this city for healing (verse 13). The church in this city remained loyal to the Lord in spite of all the ungodly surroundings. This city was in the hands of Satan, and his followers killed a believer named Antipas. In spite of all these persecution, murder and harassment, the church here remained strong and faithful to the Lord (verse 13).

There are churches like this in the body of Christ even today. Many churches exist where they are constantly being harassed and persecuted. These churches exist where there is a visible presence of Satan's activities. They face trouble on a daily basis, but they still remain faithful. They do not give up. Even under death threats they still stand firm in the Lord. These are strong churches that never let the enemy have any foothold. They fight and overcome all the schemes of the enemy. They are constantly on the lookout for attacks from the enemy outside and fight successfully and overcome.

BUT...

The Lord says He still has a few complaints against them. This is it.... *"You tolerate some among you who are like Balaam, who showed Balak how to trip up the people of Israel.*

He taught them to worship idols by eating food offered to idols and by committing sexual sin. In the same way, you have some Nicolaitans among you " (verse 14, 15).

The church in Pergamum was well aware of the dangers from the outside and has been very successful in dealing with them. But the Lord is telling them that they have some people within the church who are undermining the church from the inside. But the church, instead of dealing with them has been tolerating their activities.

This is the complaint of the Lord toward many churches today. Many churches are tolerating false teachers who have crept into the body of Christ. The way these false teachers work is given clearly in verses 14, 15. They will work like Balaam (II Peter 2: 21), (Jude 1:11). Balaam was the prophet the King of Moab, Balak hired to curse the Israelites (Numbers 22-24). He was a prophet of God, but he had strayed away from the Lord due to his lust for the things of this world. In other words, he was a backslidden prophet.

All of these false teachers are backslidden believers. That is what Jude writes about them *"They are not only dead, but doubly dead"* (Jude 12) & (II Peter 2: 21). These false teachers are doubly dead. Which means, they were dead once, were made alive in Christ and they are dead again. The danger with them is, that most believers do not know when they died the second time. Their second death does not happen visibly. They would slowly die inside as material things take hold of them and choke the life inside. Still, they would continue to worship God, speak of God and everything about them on the outside would be normal. But inside they are dead.

They also start spreading their "gospel". Their "gospel" leads people to idolatry, the equivalent to today's materialism. Because the Bible says *"Don't be greedy for the good things of this life, for this is idolatry"* (Colossians 3:5). Love for material things is Idolatry. This type of preaching is what we hear so much these days. These prosperity gospel preachers appeal to the desires of the flesh indirectly by twisting God's word.

Their influence has crept in to many churches today. Balaam blessed Israel in public; he could not curse God's children. But he also made the people of Israel worship idols by his trickery (Num. 31:16). This is what these false teachers are like, on the surface they look like messengers of God but truly they are messengers from hell who lead God's children astray. These false teachers *are like dried-up springs of water or as clouds blown away by the wind - promising much and delivering nothing* (II Peter 2:17). Yes, they make promises of "good life", "painless life", "life with luxury cars and mansions". Their promises betray where their heart is.

Churches and leaders should stand up against this influence which leads people away from God. They should not tolerate false teachers. Wake up, and discern the things various people preach. Never tolerate teachings that appeal to the flesh. Never be passive and aloof as these people creep into the church. Never let the devil deceive into thinking you are being judgmental. When someone leads God's children away, you have to discern and take actions. This is not judging, this is discerning the wheat from the chaff. Many believers and pastors I spoke to, say that they do not want to sound too judgmental. You are not judging, you are discerning. Discerning the wheat from the chaff is your responsibility, never shy away from your responsibilities.

Remember, tolerating this ungodly influence inside the church does not please God. This is what the Lord says: *"Repent or I will come to you suddenly and fight against them with the sword of my mouth"* (verse 16). If we do not do what He has asked, then He will do it Himself. We would have lost an opportunity to serve Him.

Church in Thyatira

Revelation 2 :18 - 29

The church in Thyatira is commended for its love, faith, service and its patient endurance. God also commends it for its constant improvement in all these things. In other words this was a growing church. It was progressing well.

There are churches today that excel in these areas. They are constantly improving. This pleases God.

BUT...

There is a complaint from the Lord for this Church... This is the complaint "*You are permitting that woman - that Jezebel who calls herself a prophet - to lead my servants astray. She is encouraging them to worship idols, eat food offered to idols and commit sexual sins*" (verse 20).

If you look at the charge here, it may sound similar to the charge against the church in Pergamum. But this charge is more serious than that. In Pergamum, the church tolerated false teachers & ungodly people who were influencing believers into ungodly behavior.

But here the charge is, that they are permitting this false teacher to preach and lead God's servants astray. In NKJV it says, "*you allow that woman Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess to teach and beguile my servants to commit sexual immorality and to eat things sacrificed to idols*" (verse 20).

They allowed or permitted this Jezebel to teach and lead God's servants astray. This is a serious charge, a church permitting a false teacher to lead God's elected servants astray. Many churches today, without proper discerning are allowing these false teachers to preach. They come as if they have some deeper truths. But these are really depths of Satan (verse 24). Like the church in Thyatira, many churches today grow and excel in many things.

But, in their zeal to grow deeper in the Lord, they sometimes fail to discern and allow these false teachers into their Churches. In their hunger for deeper truths sometimes they fall for these teachers whose "deeper truths" are really depths of Satan.

I was shocked to hear one of these false teachers say this: "The apostle Paul suffered so much because he did not know the truth that we know now. If he had known what we know and teach, he would not have suffered so much". This is what they call "deeper truths", but in reality it is the depths of Satan. I can give you many examples of such "deeper truths" that originate in the minds of these false teachers. These things do not come from God.

This is the message; never have anything to do with them. Never encourage any of their "ministries". Come out of them completely. These teachers will face the consequence for their actions. If you associate with them, you too will. Please come out of all these strange teachings and cling to the pure word of God.

Those of you who have nothing to do with these false teachers, the Lord is saying "Hold tightly to what you have until I come".

Church in Sardis

Revelation 3: 1 - 6.

This is what the Lord says about this church: " *I know all the things you do, and that you have a reputation for being alive-but you are dead. Now wake up, strengthen what little remains, for even what is left is at the point of death. Your deeds are far from right in the sight of God. Go back to what you hear and believed at first; hold to it firmly and turn to me again* (verses 1-3).

This is a church that once had a reputation for being alive. But now it is dead. These last days, the Body of Christ is filled with churches like this. They exist, but are dead. They are infested with sin and their deeds are far from right in the sight of God. They are dead because there is no life of the Spirit in them. They are completely dead to the guidance of the Spirit of God. Their hearts are infested with the things of this world and their Spirit is dead. They are completely cut off from Christ, the head of the church.

It is the Sardis church that discusses whether homosexuality is sin or not. It is the Sardis church that talks of tolerance toward "alternate lifestyles". What is there to discuss when the Bible so clearly says that it is an abominable sin? They are so dead that they function more like a political party than a church. Their ministers are more politicians than servants of the Holy God.

They teach a "Jesus" who fits into their theology. They preach a "Jesus" who tolerates sin, who does not punish sinners. They serve a "Jesus" who comes to all kinds of ceremonies & functions to bless.

They are so dead, that no word of God can touch their heart. They are so dead, that, they even get doctorates in theology without understanding anything about the Bible or its author, the Holy Spirit. They are so dead, that no life comes out of them. They try to make people come to their churches by "Innovative ideas" and "Tolerant preaching". Let me tell you, as long as they are dead, none of their "Innovative ideas" can make people come to their services. They are filled with dead people. Their worship is dead. Their preaching is dead. They are So Dead!!

The Lord says to this dead Church: "*Go back to what you heard and believed at first; hold to it firmly and turn to me again* (verse 3). Go back to what you heard and believed at first. To some this means going back a long way.

This is what the Lord is telling them. Go back. Go back and see the sacrifice of saints who built your church. The blood that was shed. The trials they went through and overcame. Go back and see the sacrifice of the people who started your church. Go back and see it all. Go back and hold to that which can give you life. Turn back to the Lord. Only He can bring you back to life.

When He brings you back to life and when He fills you with His Spirit and His power. Your ministry will be blessed. Life will flow from you. People will come to your services. You will fulfill the purpose that God has for you.

Also the Lord says: "*Yet even in Sardis there are some who have not soiled their garments with evil deeds*" (verse 4). Yes, even among such deadness, there are people who are alive and are serving God the way which is pleasing to Him. I thank and praise God for such people in such churches. God has His true children everywhere, even in Sardis.

Church in Philadelphia

Revelation 3:7 - 13.

This is another church against which the Lord finds no fault. This was not a very spectacular church. This is what the Lord says "*You have little strength, yet you obeyed my word and did not deny me.*" (Verse 8). "*Because you have obeyed my command to persevere, I will protect you from the great time of testing that will come upon the whole world to test those who belong to this world*" (verse 10).

This church persevered. This church was commended for its obedience and its perseverance, in spite of the fact that it had little strength (verses 8 & 10). From the outside to look at, this church may not be very appealing. But this is a church which is obedient, sincere, long suffering and meek. It is a church that has nothing to boast about, other than its faithfulness to God. It persevered in spite of all false accusations thrown at it and the Lord promised that its accusers will bow down to its feet (verse 9).

This is the kind of church the Lord is looking for today:

- A church that is committed to obeying His word irrespective of consequences.
- A church that is sincere, humble and meek.

A church that perseveres accusations, slander and oppositions by not denying Him.

These days, whenever pastors speak of their churches, they mostly boast about the number of people that attend their service, the size of their church, the VIPs that attend their church and the choir. This is how a church is defined. These are the parameters that determine "success" or "failure" of churches these days. These are the things that people want to hear about and pastors want to boast about. It is all down to numbers, size, people and music.

A church that defines its strength based on material things and human planning, mistakes the true power of the Church. To mistake the true power of the Church's strength is to mistake the true character of the church. To mistake the true character of the Church is to mistake the true purpose of the church.

There is nothing wrong with material things or human planning, as long as they are not mistaken. A church that cannot define itself based on the fruit of the spirit, but instead needs the temporal and material things to do so, is a church that needs a deep introspection.

The fruit that God looks for in a church are of the Spirit. They are not temporal. They are eternal. The way God looks at a church is different from the way men do. If you want to see what God sees in a church, develop a vision that looks to the eternal things and a mind that is eternity conscious. A mind that is eternity conscious and a vision that looks at eternal things will definitely look and think only of things that are eternal. It cannot boast of numbers, buildings, people etc...

An eternity conscious mind analyzes things based on its value in the Kingdom of God. "Eyes" that are trained to "see" eternal things will see only things that are of any worth in the Kingdom of God.

I know of some pastors who pastor churches with thousands of people, but still see beyond those thousands and see the things that matter in the Kingdom of God. They only boast of the struggle they overcame, the character that was developed in them and their desire to obey God in all things. These are pastors who have "eyes" that look eternal and minds that are eternity conscious. The things that matter to them are those that are valuable in the Kingdom of God. Nothing of this temporal world excites them. They do not boast of the thousands, the buildings, the people etc...

God is not looking for churches that boast of their numbers or churches that do dramatic things. He is looking for churches that listen to Him and obey Him in all things. Many churches today do a lot of things. I do not know how many of those things they do are directed by the Lord and how many of them are directed by tradition, habit and flesh.

Just because you do the right things does not mean you are doing God's will. You will do God's will only when you listen to Him every day and do exactly what He tells you to do.

This is the message to churches that are like the church in Philadelphia, "*Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown*" (verse 11).

Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3: 14 - 22.

I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish you were one or the other! But since you are like lukewarm water, I will spit you out of my mouth (verses 15,16).

The Lord says that the church in Laodicea was lukewarm, neither hot nor cold. This is the sorry state of many churches today. What does it mean to be lukewarm? How do you get lukewarm water? It is by mixing the hot and the cold. Lukewarm nature is the result of a mixture. Mixing is the cause and lukewarm nature is the effect.

Many ministers today are genuinely concerned about lukewarm nature in churches today. But most of them are dealing with the effect, not the cause. Their preaching is mainly directed against the lukewarm attitude of the believers, not against the cause that brings in this attitude. You will not solve the problem if you address the effect.

You have to deal with the cause to bring about a solution.

Here the cause is mixing. Mixing of what? Mixing of the world and the Church, the spiritual and the material, the Holy and the unholy. This is the kind of mixture that causes lukewarm nature in churches today.

The church is distinctly and absolutely a spiritual institution. It is an institution created, vitalized, possessed, and directed by the Spirit of God. Its ministers and doctrines have appeal, relevance and power only when they are channels of the Holy Spirit. If the devil by any means can shut the Holy Spirit out of the church, he has effectively prevented that church from being God's church on the earth. The way he accomplishes this is not by some obvious work of evil, but by quiet displacement and unnoticed substitution. Remember, one of devil's effective strategies is not to destroy churches, but to mix the world to it to make it lukewarm. That is why the mixture is dangerous.

Slowly, the deadly mixture results in lukewarm attitude, without any one noticing it. As a result, church leaders lose sight of spiritual edification and substitute it with entertainment and social gatherings. Fighting in the Spirit will be substituted with fighting in elections for posts in the worldly government. Instead of fighting the powers of darkness and principalities, we begin to fight for "our rights". Instead of transforming the mind of believers we begin to try to transform society and its behavior.

In effect, we start to do things for God with the weapons of the world. Many Christians, no matter how sincere their efforts are, have fallen for this trap from the devil. Many

ministers on Christian TV these days want to change the world for Jesus by influencing Presidents, Prime Ministers and Governors by entering politics.

I heard a minister say that a youth group of his has joined the communist party in their college to influence the voting for the college president. He says he is encouraging his people to run for these posts so that they can change the colleges for Jesus. Some say they want to enter the secular music industry to "claim all kinds of music for Jesus". Some want to bring secular music into the church and claim they are "taking back from the devil good music".

I do not doubt their sincerity. It may even sound very spiritual.

But I wonder, how could they be so wrong? How could these ministers who claim to read the Bible get it all so wrong? Don't they know that the world is under the power and influence of the evil one? Don't they know that the only way to fight the evil one in this world is on our knees and not in elections? Don't they know that we are to fight the influence of ungodly music by staying away from it, not embracing it? Don't they know that the power of the early church was only by the power of the Holy Spirit? Don't they read in Acts that the early church did not need anything from the world, because the power of the Holy Spirit was sufficient for them.

Don't they know that the fight that we are in, is not against people but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world (Ephesians 6:12). Our fight is not with the seen world, but with the unseen world!!

Don't they know that all the power structures of this world, the money, the music and the entertainment are under the influence of the evil one? The Bible makes it very clear. "We know that we are children of God and that the world around us is under the power and control of the evil one" (I John 5:19), (II Corinth 4:4). It doesn't matter how hard you shout at the devil, the truth does not change, the world is still under the influence of the evil one.

That is why we are called to live as foreigners here on earth (I Peter 1:17). We are in the world, but we are not of the world (John 17: 14,15). This is not our home. We are on our way, to the Kingdom that is eternal. We are expecting Jesus to come back and establish His Kingdom here on this earth.

Instead of waiting for Jesus to come and setup His Kingdom on this earth, many in the body of Christ want it established now with their money and influence. Instead of influencing the world with its divine love and holy life, the body of Christ wants to influence the world with its money. Instead of influencing the world with its humility, many churches today want to impress and influence the world with their size, numbers and figures. The church is so poor that the only thing it has is money and influence.

The Lord is saying to these churches what He told the church in Laodicea. "*And you don't realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. I advice you to buy gold from me-gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. And also buy white garments so you will not be shamed by your nakedness. And buy ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see* (verses 17, 18).

To the church that thinks it can influence this world for Jesus with its money, influence, TV Channels, unholy music and worldly power instead of humility, love, patience, meekness, gentleness and long suffering, the Lord says " You are miserable and poor and blind and naked". Miserable and poor because there is nothing spiritual in them, the only

thing they have is money. Blind, because they do not see what the Lord wants them to see in His word. Naked, because they are not wearing the garment of righteousness.

A great man of God, E. M. Bounds in his book "Guide to Spiritual warfare" says: "Wealth and prosperity may be the costly spices and splendid decorations that embalm and entomb our spirituality. True strength lies in the godliness of the people. The personal holiness of the members of each church is the only true measure of strength. Any other test offends God, dishonors Christ, grieves the Holy Spirit, and degrades religion."

The Lord asks these churches to purchase from him gold purified with fire. Gold that does not go through fire is never pure. The same way, Christians who have not been through fire cannot be pure. Fire has a purifying effect. But it also completely disintegrates the metal first, before purifying. If you want to be pure you should die to yourself and be ready to be disintegrated. Then, when you come out of the fire, you will come out as pure gold. Believers who are purified by fire are as pure gold in churches.

The Lord also asks these churches to buy white garments which symbolize righteousness and holiness.

The Lord asks them to buy ointment to see, so that they can see clearly. To see clearly what the Lord shows when they read the Bible.

The message is this, turn from the mixing and hold on to what is pure and holy. Seek the treasures of heaven, and then you will be rich.

Conclusion

In conclusion, let me say, that the reason the Lord corrects us is because He loves us. *"I am the one who corrects and disciplines everyone I love. Be diligent and turn from your indifference"* (verse 19).

The reason He wrote these messages is not to condemn us, but because He loves us. He wants us to turn from the things that hinder us from living a life that is pleasing to Him.

Jesus is coming soon. He wants His Bride to be spotless and Holy. Because He is Holy and He has called us to be holy. He is coming back as a judge in glory!! Let us get ready to meet the judge.

Are you ready to be judged?

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