

Seven Churches & Our Witness

1. Ephesus [Revelation 2:1-7] [*conquer through a changed devotion, focus, vision*] loved their Church more than the Lord's Kingdom. The building and what went on inside on a weekend was centric in their organizational planning. They defended truth (that was good) but failed to be active in the work of God. They defended their religion more than their witness.
2. Smyrna [Revelation 2:8-11] [*conquer through fear and martyrdom*] feared confrontation and persecution. And yet we signed up for spiritual warfare. We must be honest about our motive when we walk furtively through a society rather than stop along the way to be noticed as followers of Christ. Being an introvert or too busy to linger may be rationalizations made only to justify our fear. As a church on the corner, do people see us anymore as "out of place" in a social order that mocks our Savior or have we become a symbol of their conquest?
 1. 10 days, a limited period of time [Nehemiah 4:12 " they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us"; Dan 1:12 "Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink."]
 2. Compulsory emperor worship under Domitian [81-96 AD].
 3. Polycarp was the 12th martyr in Smyrna to be burned alive at age 86
3. Pergamum [Revelation 2:12-17] [*conquer through a compromised message*] was compromised. They embraced teachings that relaxed the standard of God's Word and condoned sinful practices. They institutionalized what should be condemned, creating new traditions, maxims, or doctrines, introducing ideas grandma would be shaken to tears if she knew. Their cooperation with the world was more important. But the pulpit is not the place to debate opposing views or offer alternative ideas to God's Word. It is for proclaiming that Word, loud and clear, simple and with uncommon emphasis, lest we fail to get the attention of those who need most to hear it!
 1. Vs 13: Antipas's martyrdom.
 2. Balaam and Nicolaitans same idea in Hebrew and Greek, respectively-conquerers of the *people*.. Introducing moral impurity, etc. but not through the pulpit "culturally" introduced among the people.
 3. "What Satan could not accomplish at Smyrna or Pergamum through intimidation, suffering, and death from outside the church, he achieved from within."
4. Thyatira [Revelation 2:18-29] [*conquer through corrupt leadership*] went further; what was a stumbling block or offensive in Pergamum was now accepted as an "ism" in Thyatira. They promoted corrupt doctrine in their pulpit, wrote it into their doctrinal statement, altered their theology to justify it and made it a denominational distinctive of what was now part and parcel of this church, the very definition of idolatry in a modern sense. Their "good works" disguised their desire for social standing in the world with whom they now walk hand in hand.
 1. Acts 19:10 some converts from Ephesus evangelized in this city.
 2. Jezebel - deceived many through her "prophetic" ministry.
 3. 1 Kings 16:31-33 the wife of Ahab who "led" her husband and leader into Baal worship [idolatry].
 4. "The Lord is walking among his churches. He judges evil; but he also offers deliverance to those who have fallen, if they repent..."
 5. Verse 23: "I am He who searches hearts..."
5. Sardis [Revelation 3:1-6] [*conquer through indifference and complacency*] was spiritually dying—Sunday morning only Christians. [vs. 2 "Wake up!"] Their comfort was more important. Perhaps a prophetic word about the sin of lethargy make shake them out of their slumber. Perhaps they forgot the mantra: Use it or lose it! They were in danger of forgetting the

truth because their experience no longer bore witness to it outside the church building.

1. The Temple of Artemus lay incomplete here. Unlike Paul, they never "finished the course" [2 Timothy 4:7].
2. "Sardis was a city of Peace, not the peace won through battle, but the peace of the man who's dreams are dead and whose mind is asleep, the piece of lethargy and evasion." [Wm. Barclay, *Letters to the 7 Churches*].
3. If he cannot frighten or corrupt God's church, get it to do nothing!
6. Philadelphia [Revelation 3:7-13] [*conquer through hesitance and procrastination*] was missing its opportunities because it didn't recognize them or feared failure. The work required resources of which the Church thought it lacked. Their personal welfare, perhaps, was more important to them. There was a saying during America's Civil War: "Counsels of war don't fight." One more committee meeting to recount the cost and take inventory of what we have prepared. The devil agrees because he knows how over-prepared this church is to witness for Christ. This was the one church that didn't need to repent. All God wanted to do was show the world what He could do when His people are faithful. God wanted to be glorified in their service to Him, but alas, they needed a convention to discuss it first. They'll let the Savior know what they decide.
 1. 3:9 The only church Christ says, "I have loved you." This does not say He didn't love the believers elsewhere but this church alone is not warned to repent for some blatant sin. There din was procrastinate. They need to be "consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:" [Hebrews 10:24]
 2. An effective witness despite its small strength. 1 Corinthians 16:9: "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." Colossians 4:3 "praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door ... to speak the mystery of Christ...."
7. Laodicea [Revelation 3:14-22] [*conquer through a misplaced interest in assets, wealth, resources, consumerism*] was into money and investments [material enrichment] rather than witnessing [spiritual enrichment]. Their business adventures and assets were more important. Perhaps, the first step for Satan is to call for a congregational meeting and change the wording of the Church documents, removing Biblical terms like "pastor, elder, etc. and replace them with chief operations officer or chief executive officer, etc. Perhaps, the church constitution might indemnify bonded trustees chosen to manage large sums of money they plan to raise. The vision comes later? Or maybe this was the vision!
 1. 3:18 "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire" Lay up treasures in heaven [Matthew 6:20].
 2. Matthew 6:24 "You cannot serve God and mammon."
 3. "The pleasure of not getting what you want drives consumerism. Consumerism becomes an endless experience of fetishism – as Marx was inchoately aware." [Graham Ward ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Postmodern Theology*]
 4. "Broadly, I would say... that the death of God had brought about the prospect of the reification [*make something that is abstract more real*] and commodification [*treating something as a mere commodity*] (theologically termed idolatry), not only of all objects, but of all values (moral "*the desires of the flesh*", aesthetic "*pleasing to the eye*", and spiritual "*The pride of life*"). We have produced a culture of fetishes or virtual objects. For now everything is not only measurable and priced, it has an image." [Ibid.] Even church "growth" can be graphed! Spirituality in terms of what can be measured and shown on a chart!
 5. Verse 3:16 we get our word emit from the Greek word "spew"