

# Message to Ephesus & Smyrna!

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Revelation 2:1-11

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We pray to Jesus because—AV **Revelation 1:18** “*I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*”

The letters to the seven churches were messages sent to *real* churches attended by *real* believers and facing *real* trials of life like we all do. Although these letters were for 1<sup>st</sup> century church, they are also for the 21<sup>st</sup> century church as well.

NIV **Revelation 2:1** “*To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands:*

*2 I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. 3 You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.*”

The angel would be the minister of the church, and the One who walks among the churches is the Lord Jesus who dictated the letters. He gives a good example on correcting someone by first mentioning the *positive* before mentioning the *negative*.

He knows of their hard work and their perseverance in the faith—that they do not have close fellowship with sinners, and they examine religious teaching to determine if it is correct doctrine.

Jesus says they have *persevered* in the faith; they have shown *patience*; and they have *not* become *wearry* in living the true Gospel.

NKJV **Revelation 2:4** “*Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.*

*5 “Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.”*”

Jesus says the church has *left* its first love—by choice on their part to *leave* their devotion and loyalty to Him. He tells them they must *recall* the position of trust in Him they once had and *return* to that position. If they do not, their church will not continue to be a church.

In human relationships, our first love can change over time—we are not so attentive or not so careful to please as we were; likewise, our first love for Christ can change from *zealousness* to *forgetfulness* and *apathy*. If that happens, we must return to faith in Christ.

It is easy to *talk* about our faith in God, but not so easy to be *living* that faith in God—it takes a true commitment on our part to keep trusting Him concerning real-life issues. AV **Matthew 7:16** “*Ye shall know them by their fruits;*” and we would know by someone’s *conduct* and *decisions* whether to *keep* or to *cut* close fellowship with them.

Jesus said AV **John 14:15** “*If ye love me, keep my commandments,*” which means to retain our *love* for God, and to keep our *trust* on Him every day—which includes *forgiving* others from the heart if they have harmed us, and to keep *loving* others as Jesus did.

NKJV **Revelation 2:6** “*But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*” Jesus loves the people but hates the “*deeds*” or the “*doctrine*” of the Nicolaitans. He loves all *people* but detests worldly ways of life and lack of faith in Him.

We should dislike all unscriptural *attitudes* and detest all *faithless living*—like that of the Nicolaitans.

Jesus is aware of our *attitudes* at any time concerning any thing. NIV **Hebrews 4:13** “*Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*”

Jesus walked in the midst of the 1<sup>st</sup> century church, and He is walks in the midst of the 21<sup>st</sup> century church—which is made up of its people. Jesus knows what is going on in our life and He knows what we are thinking in our mind—we need to keep that ever before us.

The Ephesian believers had worked hard and spent much time to learn more of God’s will and Word—to which Jesus says: “*I know your deeds.*”

The Word of God is quick and powerful—it cuts into our *thoughts* and *desires*; it is AV **Hebrews 4:12** “*a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*” His eyes AV **Revelation 1:14** “*were as a flame of fire*” in judging our ways and words.

Others may not notice or care when we help someone, but God knows and that is all that matters. The Ephesian believers lived in the midst of a pagan city that was known for idolatry, false teaching, and wrong beliefs—many worshiped pagan gods of Rome.

The Ephesian believers were earnestly serving the Lord—showing much patience in a difficult environment.

They were surrounded by false doctrines, so they had to be careful what doctrine they

accepted. They had to guard against being apathetic or careless concerning faith in God. And despite all the good qualities of the Ephesians, there was something it lacked. AV Revelation 2:4 “*Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.*”

It was not a matter of *losing* love, but of deliberately *leaving* the love for God—the love they once had for Him. If we *lose* something we do not know where it is, but if we *leave* something we consciously walk away from it—even though we know where it is.

The Ephesian believes had been so busy with things of the *world*, that they were neglecting the things of the *Lord*—like producing spiritual fruit of NLT Galatians 5:22 “*Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control.*”

They were *not* careful to keep their *trust* on God through a genuine *love* for Him. They knew the truth of the Gospel and were walking in its light, but they allowed disinterest to diminish their enthusiasm. It is possible to fall away from trust on God—it *has* happened.

NKJV Revelation 2:7 “*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.*”

If we love *God*, we will love His *Word*—we want to *hear* it; *read* it; *study* it; and *live* by what it teaches—as the Holy Spirit enables us to do.

If we love *God*, we will love what *He* loves—faithfulness, trust, mercy, kindness, patience, forgiveness, and genuine love for everyone. AV John 15:17 “*These things I command you, that ye love one another.*”

NKJV Revelation 2:8 “*And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, ‘These things says the*

*First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life:*

9 “*I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.*”

Today, Smyrna is the modern city of Izmir, and back then it was an important seaport 35 miles north of Ephesus. Roman culture and the Jewish population made life difficult for Christians in 1<sup>st</sup> century.

The bishop of the church, Polycarp, was persecuted and later martyred for his faith in Christ.

The synagogue of Satan is a metaphor in reference to unbelieving Jews in Smyrna who were persecuting believing Christians within the city. The synagogue was a gathering place for worship, study, and community activities.

NKJV Revelation 2:10 “*Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*”

The Greek word for *devil* is *diabolos*—meaning *accuser* or *adversary*. NIV John 15:21 “*They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.*”

In Greece, a crown referred to garland of green leaves given to winners in athletic events. AV James 1:12 “*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*”

11 “*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.*”

AV Revelation 20:14 “*And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*”

Revelation promises a blessing to those who *hear* and *keep* the truth of its words—NKJV Revelation 22:7 “*Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.*”

Therefore, it is important that we study and understand what Revelation is teaching about the last days. The apostle John gives amazing insights into the future dwelling place for all true believers who remain steadfast in their faith in Christ.

AV Hebrews 3:14 “*For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.*”

As we continue to *read* and *study* and *keep* the words of this prophecy, we have this assurance: NKJV Revelation 3:10 “*Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.*”

11 *Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.*”



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\*Receive free Tracts email:  
[fcgchurch1@gmail.com](mailto:fcgchurch1@gmail.com)

Or write to: PO Box 24283  
Philadelphia, PA 19120

#3115 0225 24P  
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