

# Walking in the Midst of His Church

## Joseph Chambers

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“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” (Ephesians 1-3)

The omnipresent Son of God is in the very midst of His Church. The Church cannot be His Church until He is in its presence. The guarantee of any group of people being truly a church is only when He is there. His presence is tangible; it is as real as life. When He draws near, all that are present will know it.

Nothing has made the Church world more helpless and problematic than the denial of the literal dimension of Christ’s Spirit. Every soul has a spiritual capacity and that is the story of Christianity. Until the theology of the Bible leaves our heads and arrives at our hearts, we are nothing but religious. The bread of communion is death to the flesh, but the drink of the cup is life and resurrection.

Jesus Christ declared emphatically that His Words were Spirit. Everything about the devil’s kingdom is paranormal and all of it is but an imitation of the real. People that involve themselves with séances, fortune telling, and any degree of witchcraft will prove to you that it is tangible and can be manifest; yet, it is all a shadow of the true God.

Common sense will tell you that no imitation is as wonderful and life changing as the original. It is foolish to accept the world of evil and its reality and deny the even greater reality of the church of Jesus Christ and His supernatural revelation. The church is either a spiritual dynamo or it is a failure. Jesus Christ is either present or it is all empty religion.

The seven letters to the seven churches and all the beautiful contents leave no question of the reality of His Church. There is a supernatural dimension to each church and all kinds of supernatural promises that these churches received from the Lord.

The truths and doctrines of the Bible are carefully made a prime treasure for which these churches were to be held accountable. They were highly commended for holding these truths against all attacks and judged if doctrines of error were allowed to triumph. To Ephesus, the Lord said:

“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” (Revelation 2:2b).

To Thyatira, He said “Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols” (Revelation 2:20). The Bible holds truth, all truth, as the one greatest challenge for which His church will be accountable to God.

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears” (2 Timothy 4:1-3).

Placing these seven letters between the post-resurrection revelation of Jesus Christ as seen in Revelation one and the future prophecies to begin in Revelation four is extremely important. The greatest mystical number in this masterpiece of literature is the number seven. This number is present in this one book of the Bible forty-four

times. It is found in Scripture three hundred and ninety-five times.

The Holy Spirit chose this number in His holy revelation to convey or reveal subjects in a whole or complete form. Seven churches mean the church universal, yet represents that universal church as each local church having special importance. Anything seen with this mystical number is important in every part, but great and vast in its totality. It's always the number of completion, whether large or small, when used in a typological form.

Remember that each of the churches is an individual church that was a real local congregation. They also represented churches of this same characteristic in each period of church history. Each church also represents a period of extended years in the whole of the church age. The Ephesus church period began at Pentecost and continued for about seventy years (approximately AD 30 to AD 100).

This was a special period, the greatest of all periods, but they were beginning to leave their first love. While studying church history, one finds that no church movement has ever maintained its vigor and vitality longer than one hundred years. The greatest hindrance in the church is always the loss of first love. Let's look at the letter to the Church of Ephesus.

“Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks” (Revelation 2:1).

Every church has a cherubim assigned to the congregation, beginning with the oversight of the shepherd and dedicated to ministering to the whole flock of that local body. Anybody who negatively attacks, criticizes, or messes with that church will be in trouble. The devil, his evil spirits, the unconverted world, and even professing believers will soon discover that the Son of God, the Lord our Christ, defends His Church if that church totally depends on its Head.

Satan often defeats the church, not because the victory is not available, but because ministers and members defeat themselves.

The seven letters show no victories for Satan, only failures in obedience and faithfulness in the church. We must not miss this point. Nowhere in Scripture, especially in these seven letters to His churches, is one victory ever credited to the devil. He cannot win because he is already totally defeated. The professing believers who simply do not apply biblical principles to the struggle lose every battle, or what could have been a victory.

These letters, including this first letter to Ephesus, show nothing but the absolute possibility of His Church rising above every circumstance and fulfilling all that He has ordained for his saints. He holds the stars or Cherubim in His perfect grasp, and they are fully equipped for their task. Then, to assure victory, He walks in the midst of His church.

“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20).

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. (Revelation 19:11-14).

“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 hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted” (Revelation 2:2-3).

Nothing of our conduct or labor is missing from His omniscience, “For we are laborers together with God (1 Corinthians 3:9), and He is fully prepared to use every pure action we provide with the promise of victory. The Son of God has made it plain that there is no design in His kingdom for defeat:

“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19).

The Lord has already said that very plainly:

“ And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).

The emphasis must be drawn between “His” church and “our” churches. Every time the church is defeated, it is never won by the devil; but it’s lost by the Church. The Head of the Church has total awareness of all our labors in full surrender to His will.

He never blesses our plans, except when those plans are His will and leading. Our own plans will accomplish nothing for the kingdom of Christ. “...the flesh profiteth nothing...” (John 6:63). The church at Ephesus was busy, very busy for His kingdom. He knew their works, their labor, and their patience; and He commended them.

He spoke only ten words of commendation before He began to emphasize His first agenda. Their faithfulness to defend truth against false apostles was high on His list. Every labor of the Church must flow out of purity of doctrine.

Today’s church exalts works of compassion above the labor of truth. The Bible has always been perfectly clear that defending the infallible Word of God is the foundational responsibility of the body of Christ. Doctrines never issue from good works, but good works always issue from good doctrines. Destroy the foundation and all is in vain.

“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent” (Revelation 2:4-5).

This pure church that loved truth and had labored through the dark night had also left the first results of receiving truth. They had left their first love. The radical fire of love had been forsaken for the greater love of being diligent against error and dedicated in labors. This has certainly occurred in every experience of His Church, and it is the scourge of our day.

No one ever loses his or her first love because nothing can defeat a fervent believer. The saints leave that radical fire of holy love for Christ because other things, often good things, crowd out the devotion of love. No Christian or church can ever be defeated until or unless they leave their first love.

Christ pleaded with them to repent because the only path back to first love is repentance. They were told to do their first works: start at the bottom and return to Him and the fire of abandonment to His love. This is the sweet joy of Christian living in a radical relationship of love.

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was” (James 1:22-23)

No one abides long in the joy of discipleship without this fire. The person that has left his first love will usually deny it and claim to still possess that love in spite of all evidences. He is probably going to be angry when you suggest his loss. It is a loss that multitudes never recover.

Most believers who have left their first love have an imitation love of religion and church that has replaced their Christ-centered love and are blind to their condition. Jesus says, “Repent or else I will remove your candlestick.” Remember that it is among the candlesticks that He walks. The joy of His presence is one of the primary losses of leaving one’s first love.

“But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 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.”

“But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ‘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’” (Revelation 2:6-7).

The Ephesian church still hated error and were full of fire against the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. This doctrine was the effort of some in the church structure to create systems of an hierarchy so that a few could control the massive multitudes. Certain men wanted power and position because they had lost the sense of a Holy Spirit led church.

The entire idea was a moving away from the lordship of Christ and the Spirit-led church life to a system of religion full of flesh and human control. It has been the failure of almost every great fellowship of believers at some point in the growth of its movement.

Every letter is concluded with a similar ending. Always the church is reminded that the sovereign Spirit of Christ is speaking. Deaf ears are not to be tolerated because this language is from the Spirit of God. Every believer must be an overcomer, because no promise is ever left for anyone but overcomers.

Just like John introduced the Lord with one of the divine titles to each church and in each letter, He also closes each letter with an element of great triumph of victory to the victors. In this letter, He promises that the overcomers will eat of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God.

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