

“Chapel Pointe’s Greatest Threat”

(Rev. 2:4-7)

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Chapel Pointe #5

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I. Introduction

A. The Push to Start New Churches in America

1. Strange!
 - Already a Church building on every corner
2. The problem is that the vast majority of the existing ones aren’t working right
 - Like new toys 3 months after Christmas
 - They’re all broken and worthless but you don’t know how to get rid of them
3. Seldom see a dying church recover....or close
 - Usually easier to start a new one than to revive a dead one!

B. My experience on the road for Masters & Cornerstone

1. Visited scores of churches
2. Most were dead!
 - a. Guy who died in church.
 - Took out ten people before they got to the right one!
 - b. Seldom a question of doctrine!
 - c.and usually run by good people
3. They fit the description of the Church of Ephesus in Rev. 2:1-7

II. Review

A. The Seven Churches of Asia Minor (Rev. 2 & 3)

1. John, the itinerate pastor
2. In exile on the Isle of Patmos

B. Started with the Church in Ephesus

1. The Congregation (v.1)

1. The “Apostolic Church”
 - a. Founded by Paul, one of the Apostles (chosen by Jesus)
2. The greatest church of its day
 - a. Great zeal for evangelism
 1. Reached all of Asia Minor
 2. Located between the other churches
 - e. Had great spiritual leadership
3. Ephesus was the greatest city in the area
 - a. Greatest harbor in Asia Minor
 - b. Up the Kaystor River (3 miles)
 - c. Four major highways converged
 - d. The marketplace of Asia Minor
 - e. Note the *Isle of Patmos*
4. Center of worship of Diana
5. Temple of Diana was one of the “7 Wonders of the Ancient World”
6. The city was as corrupt as any city of its day
 - a. In the middle was a devoted band of believers

III. Text

A. The Commendation (v.2-3 & v.6)

1. Had three incredible attributes

a. They were a hard working church

1. ***“I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance.”***
(v.2)

2. They weren't afraid to work hard

a. Reached all of Asia Minor

b. They were the “Mother church”

3. Nothing will take the place of hard work

a. At Chapel Pointe

b. They were a doctrinally pure church

1. ***“I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men,”*** (v.2)

2. ***“you have tested those who claim to be apostles”***

a. Caught the liars

3. ***“You hate the practice of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate”***
(v.6)

a. Deacon Nicolas of Acts 6:5

b. Perverted grace

c. License for loose and lewd living

d. Pushed unbridled liberty

4. Ephesians jumped all over them

a. Kept the wolves out (Eph. 4:27)

b. Listened and obeyed Paul (Acts 20:29)

c. Hated false doctrine

d. Tested teachers

5. Chapel Pointe

c. *They were a persevering church*

1. ***“You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary”*** (v.3)

2. They wouldn't quit

3. “You have not grown weary”

4. Are you tired???

5. Chapel Pointe

2. What a great group, right?

a. Hard working

b. Separated from the world

c. Pure of doctrine

d. Persistent

3. Despite all of this –

B. The Concern (v.4)

1. Expressed by Jesus himself

2. ***“Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. (v.4)***

a. How could it happen?

b. What went wrong?

c. Only 30 years since Paul was there

- d. The church disappeared from the scene shortly thereafter
- e. But why?
- f. And what can we learn from this warning

3. Their problem

- a. “You have forsaken your first love”
- b. Repent or else! (v.5)
 - Lampstand will be removed
- c. When the loves cools in a marriage
 1. Married 12 years
 2. Still faithful
 3. Nevertheless the fire has died
 - The early days
 - LOVE!
 4. When the passion fades...
- d. Ephesus started out with passion!
 1. ***(Acts 19:10) – “And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus both Jews and Greeks.”***
 2. Demetrius’ testimony against Paul

(Acts 19:26) – “Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands.”
 3. The hottest thing in town!
 4. But they lost it!

5. Why and how?

6. Happens today

- To individuals as well as local assemblies
- Why do they become spiritually cold while clutching the keys to Divine Truth?

C. Symptoms of a cooling church.....

1. Services focus on the mechanics instead of the goal of worship

- a. "Another Sunday"
 - "I've seen it all before"
 - Service is a drudgery
- b. Don't get anything out of it
- c. Beware when your Christian service becomes merely routine
- d. No emotional connection with God

2. The children lack the passion of the founders

- a. Takes a lot of passion to be a "founding father"
- b. Succeeded by those with the same doctrine but without the fire!
- c. When parents come to Christ
 - War with Satan
 - But it is so easy for kids

--never fought the same war
- d. Doctrine is seldom the issue
- e. 2nd generation = caretaker syndrome

3. Members no longer practice all that they preach or teach

- a. Tend to apply the lessons to others but not to self
- b. Selective in their emphasis
 - 1. Students don't remember what you *teach*, but what you *emphasize*
- c. Think that passion and love will come automatically with proper doctrine
- d. Oh, so many great teachers have fallen
 - Oh, so many great churches
 - And they *know* the consequences
- e. Involved in the sin they are preaching against
 - They block it out

4. Separation from sin becomes isolation from sinners

- a. The G.A.R.B.C. controversy
 - Secondary separation
 - Tertiary
 - Where do you stop?
 - How do you get to the unsaved
 - A wall of separation
 - Baptist monasticism
- b. No longer need God's power
- c. "We four – no more – shut the door"
- d. We need to take it to the streets!
 - This church

5. Take pride in their property, programs, purity, or position

a. Ephesus

- We're so pure!

b. Today?

- We are so pure! -- so separated

c. Denominational pride

1. "We don't do that!"
2. Pride in lifestyle, etc.
3. Forget we are sinners, saved by grace

d. Leaders (I Tim. 3:6)

- Elders
- ***"Not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil"***

e. Our susceptibility

- Blessing
- Pride
- The fire can die!

f. Pride in education

1. The Seminary syndrome
 - a. "I'm a seminary grad"
 - b. "I know Greek and Hebrew"
2. Watch out!
 - a. Have made education a sacred cow

b. And God never mentioned it – I Tim 3

g. Pride in buildings

6. *Fail to appreciate the dangers of spiritual warfare*

a. Satan’s commitment and ability to destroy the church is underestimated

b. Leaders in Ephesus watched for false doctrine

- “Worship in spirit and in truth”

c. But failed to guard against spiritual lethargy

d. Heart disease struck

- Hardening of the arteries

e. Satan can finish a Christian just as easy by “cooling” as by “clobbering”

7. *The Bible becomes an end rather than a means to the end*

a. More time is spent with the Word of God than the God of the Word

b. The Bible must never be the end (or the goal)

c. God is the goal – Bible is a tool to reach the end (God)

d. Passion comes from an individual’s time alone with God (Prayer)

- Not from knowledge of the Bible

8. *More concerned with defending the faith than sharing the faith*

a. Must save lost sinners, not slay them

b. Reach the lost with the love of God, not the wrath of God

c. The fallacy of the Crusades

- The Cross as a symbol of war
- Wrong

-- Symbol of love

9. Place more emphasis on programs than people

- a. Programs for everything
- b. Programs, like buildings, are mere tools to reach people
- e. Programs are the tools – not the goal

10. They become overly concerned with political correctness

- a. Fear being persecuted for their faith
 - 1. Desire political correctness
- b. Persecution is the cure for apathy
 - 1. Didn't cost anything to be a Christian in Ephesus
- c. Lots of tag-a-long Christians
- d. This group wouldn't have lasted in Smyrna
- e. The American Church
 - Socially acceptable
 - So easy
 - Fat and lazy

11. Their passion to reach the lost begins to wane

- a. All kinds of excuses not to do it
- b. Make fun of those who do reach out for the lost
- c. Criticize methods used by others
- d. Individuals saved last Sunday

*Andrew

12. Their passion and love for Christ begins to cool

- a. A religion of rules and regulation
- b. The death of love!
- c. A caution for you and me!

D. The Challenge (v.5 & 7)

1. They needed to get the love and passion back into their service

a. ***“Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.” (v.5)***

b. Love and passion cool without attention

c. Do you remember the joy of your salvation?

1. Or the last time you and God got things worked out?

d. The key is to repent of attitude as well as actions

1. The sin of “apathy”

2. If not, the blessing of God will pass from that church

“If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place” (v.5)

a. God will chose another church to bless

b. So many churches just sitting on the shelf

c. ...and we must make sure it never happens here

d. Nobody ever thought it would happen to Ephesus

1. or Fountain Street

3. This is a challenge to all the churches

a. ***“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (v.7)***

4. Jesus gives a promise to those who overcome

a. ***“To him who overcomes I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God” (v.7)***

b. John elsewhere defines an “over comer” as a “Christian”

“for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. (5) Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.” (I John 5:4-5)

5. The “over comer’s” reward awaits them in heaven

a. ***“I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God”***

b. The tree of life was in the Garden of Eden

1. Removed after the sin of Adam and Eve

2. Those who eat from it will never die

c. The tree is now in heaven

d. Paradise is another name for heaven