

SEVEN HABITS OF UNHEALTHY CHURCHES PART - I

Text: Revelation 2

Key Word: Habits

Key Thought: There Are Seven Habits That Every Church Must Avoid

“Habit is a cable; we weave a thread of it every day, and at last we cannot break it.”

Horace Mann

“The chains of habit are generally too small to be felt until they are too strong to be broken.”

Samuel Johnson

“Bad habits are like comfortable beds—easy to get into but hard to get out of.”

Sources Unknown

*** “Philip Haille wrote of the little village of Le Chambon in France, a town whose people, unlike others in France, hid their Jews from the Nazis. Haille went there, wondering what sort of courageous, ethical heroes could risk all to do such extraordinary good. He interviewed people in the village and was overwhelmed by the ordinariness. They weren’t heroes or smart, discerning people.

Haille decided that the one factor that united them was their attendance, Sunday after Sunday, at their little church, where they heard the sermons of Pastor Trochme. Over time, they became by habit people who just knew what to do and did it. When it came time for them to be courageous, the day the Nazis came to town, **they quietly did what was right.**

One old woman, who faked a heart attack when the Nazis came to search her house, later said, *‘Pastor always taught us that there comes a time in every life when a person is asked to do something for Jesus. When our time came, we knew what to do.’*

True habits of the heart are there when they are most needed.”

William H. Willimon
“Pulpit Digest”

There are good habits and there are bad habits. Today I want to focus upon **bad habits** in an attempt to bring about whatever changes God may be requiring of us in our churches.

What are Seven Habits of Unhealthy Churches?

I. THEY FAIL TO CONTINUE LOVING GOD AND EACH OTHER (2:1:6)

II. THEY ARE FEARFUL OF ADVERSITY (2:9,10)

III. THEY TOLERATE POOR THEOLOGY AND IMMORAL BEHAVIOUR (2:14-16)

IV. THEY WHITEWASH OVER SINFUL ACTIONS (2:20-23)

V. THEY RELAX IN THEIR REPUTATION (3:1-3)

VI. THEY FOCUS ON THEIR WEAKNESSES (3:8)

VII. THEY FAIL TO DEPEND UPON GOD (3:17,18)

I. THEY FAIL TO CONTINUE LOVING GOD AND EACH OTHER (2:1:6)

The Church at Ephesus was placed in one of the most strategic locations of any of the seven churches in Asia Minor. It could boast having one the best harbour fronts along the entire Mediterranean coastline. But it also was renowned for its obsession with idolatry. The Temple of Diana/Artemis was considered to be one the great wonders of the world. Paul had to face the problem head on during his third missionary journey (Acts 19:23-41).

When the apostle John (who was also once the bishop of Ephesus) addressed this church with the words of Jesus, he had something good to say to them. They were commended for their rigorous attention to true doctrine and their abhorrence of evil.

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

...

6. But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Revelation 2:2,6

Yet even though they had taken such an important stand, they were not strong in their relationship of love toward God which would also reflect on their love to each other. **We must be on guard against an attitude of always standing against evil and yet allowing our heart to harden with a lack of love in our battle to overcome evil.**

“Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.”

Revelation 2:4

II. THEY ARE FEARFUL OF ADVERSITY (2:9,10)

The church in Smyrna was one of the few ones that Jesus had only good words to say to it. **Yet He was also sensitive to the fact that they were susceptible to failure. The Lord knew that persecution has a way of challenging even the most stable Christian.** He therefore warned them not to lose their faith even though they were surrounded by those involved in emperor worship and Judaism.

A strong church is able to be faithful in the midst of adversity because it understands that its strength comes from the Lord. **An unhealthy church cannot recognize its richness during times of affliction and poverty. True faith in God has never meant that we can eliminate troubles from coming our way.** In fact, our faith can only be understood when trials come and situations appear hopeless. **Fear and faith never abide together for long.** One will always overcome the other.

“Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

Revelation 2:10

“Pain is distressing. There can be nights of agony when God seems so unfair and it seems that there is no possible help or answer. Temporary relief may seem adequate, **but the real solution to suffering is not to isolate it in an attempt to do away with it, nor even to grit our teeth and endure it. The solution, rather, is to condition our attitudes so that we learn to triumph in and through suffering.**”

*“The Billy Graham Christian Worker’s Handbook”
Minneapolis: World Wide Pub.
1984, pp. 223*

“Contrary to what might be expected, I look back on experiences that at the time seemed especially desolating and painful with particular satisfaction. Indeed, I can say with complete truthfulness that everything I have learned in my 75 years in this world, **everything that has truly enhanced and enlightened my experience, has been through affliction and not through happiness.**”

*Malcolm Muggeridge
“Homemade”
July, 1990*

III. THEY TOLERATE POOR THEOLOGY AND IMMORAL BEHAVIOUR (2:14-16)

The Church in Pergamum had to withstand the cult of emperor worship. In fact, it was renown as the central city of this practise. During the cruel reign of Domitian, the first martyr in Asia (Antipas) was roasted in a bronze kettle for not worshipping the emperor.

*“Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality.
15. Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.”*

Revelation 2:14,15

Without getting into a deep explanation of their poor habits we can easily say that they tolerated poor theology and immoral behaviour. This church was destroyed from the inside out. Any church that allows itself to accept a compromising attitude toward any false teaching that is clearly addressed from the Scriptures will rot from within.

We are witnessing this very decline in churches that once stood for holiness are now **ordaining practising homosexuals**. They no longer preach that it is sinful to live in **common law relationships (adultery)**. Babies can be **aborted** because a mother has “the right over her own body.” They accept anything and everything as long as it can be justified through a brilliant discussion. They have slowly lowered their standards into accepting a host of poor habits.

“Habit is habit and not to be flung out of the window by any man, but coaxed downstairs a step at a time.”

Mark Twain

*** Years ago when the western U. S. was being settled, roads were often just wagon tracks. These rough trails posed serious problems for those who journeyed on them. On one of these winding paths was posted a sign which read: “*Avoid this rut or you’ll be in it for the next 25 miles!*” ***

Source Unknown

There are many roads that we as the church of Christ MUST avoid getting stuck into. If we are not careful, it will lead us down a track that will be very difficult to get out of.

IV. THEY WHITEWASH OVER SINFUL ACTIONS (2:20-23)

“Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.”

21. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling.

22. So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways.

23. I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.”

Revelation 2:20-23

Anytime the name Jezebel is used in Scripture you can be assured that sinful behaviour is crouching at the door. Her name stands for idolatry, sexual immorality and feminism. She has been hailed by the feminist movement as one of the first queens that took her rightful position.

No matter what is said in defence of her, the Bible makes it clear that her teaching and behaviour are not to be tolerated by God’s people. Any church that decides to shun this warning will find itself declining in spiritual health.

We’ve seen the epidemic of AIDS that rapidly destroyed millions of people in our world. Not only did it affect those who committed these acts of sexual immorality but also their children were being infected in their mother’s wombs. History and the Scriptures are repeating themselves. It is not a pretty picture. AIDS along with many other STD’s have rapidly increased because millions have tried to shun this law of sowing and reaping. I’m sure that many have wished they were never tempted in this area of sin. This spark has created a forest fire of attacks against the Church and the Bible.

*“The piece was first seen publicly on 25 July 2015 at an event organized by the Detroit chapter of The Satanic Temple, amidst protests by religious organizations. The 700 attendees at the unveiling ceremony had to **"sell their souls to Satan"** in order to receive a ticket, a tactic that the Temple stated was done in order to **"keep away some of the more radical superstitious people who would try to undermine the event."***

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statue_of_Baphomet

****** I took a pack of cigarettes from my pocket, stared at it and said, “*Who’s stronger, you or me?*” The answer was me. I stopped smoking. Then I took a vodka martini and said to it, “*Who’s stronger, you or me?*” Again the answer was me. I quit drinking. Then I went on a diet. I looked at a big plate of linguine with clam sauce and said, “*Who’s stronger, you or me?*” And a little clam looked up at me and answered, “*I am.*” I can’t beat linguine.

Tommy Lasorda, Los Angeles Dodgers manager
as reported by Ron Fimrite in “*Sports Illustrated*”

Let us determine in our hearts not to make any bad habits. Secondly, if we have any bad habits let us make a stand to eliminate them through the power of God’s Holy Spirit working in and through our lives.

Let Us Especially Decide to Overcome These Four Dangerous Habits!

I. FAILURE TO CONTINUE LOVING GOD AND EACH OTHER (2:1:6)

II. FEARFUL OF ADVERSITY (2:9,10)

III. TOLERATING POOR THEOLOGY AND IMMORAL BEHAVIOUR (2:14-16)

IV. WHITEWASHING OVER SINFUL ACTIONS (2:20-23)

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Revelation 2:7,11,17,29

C:\My Documents\WPWin(2020)\Sermons.2021\Hearing God’s Voice\Revelation2.wpd

Date: Mar 21/21

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 Am

Song: Change my Heart - C

SEVEN HABITS OF UNHEALTHY CHURCHES PART - I

Text: Revelation 2

Key Word: Habits

Key Thought: There Are Seven Habits That Every Church Must Avoid

What are Seven Habits of Unhealthy Churches?

I. THEY FAIL TO CONTINUE LOVING GOD AND EACH OTHER (2:1:6)

- Acts 19:23-41

II. THEY ARE FEARFUL OF ADVERSITY (2:9,10)

III. THEY TOLERATE POOR THEOLOGY AND IMMORAL BEHAVIOUR (2:14-16)

IV. THEY WHITEWASH OVER SINFUL ACTIONS (2:20-23)

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Revelation 2:7,11,17,29