

“Remember Your Purpose!”
The Church At Ephesus ~ Part 1
Revelation 2:1-3

Introduction:

1. Every Business Has A Product!
 - An Oil Company's Product Is Gas!
 - A Bank's Product Is Financial Service!
 - Without A Product, There Would Be No Reason For A Business!
2. In The Broadest Sense Of The Term, The Church Has A Product As Well!
 - When Jesus Christ Left His People, He Told Them What That Product Would Be:
 - Matthew 28:19-20 - "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen!"
 - The Product Is Developing Disciples Of Jesus Christ! Through Witnessing, Teaching & Baptizing!
3. Most Businesses Not Only Started To Develop A Product, But Also To Fulfill A Mission -- A Purpose!
 - Most Companies Today Have A "Mission Statement!"
 - 3M - "To solve unsolved problems innovatively"
 - Mary Kay Cosmetics - "To give unlimited opportunity to women."
 - Merck - "To preserve and improve human life."
 - Wal-Mart - "To give ordinary folk the chance to buy the same thing as rich people."
 - Walt Disney - "To make people happy."
 - But, After A While, Many Of These Companies Stop Focusing On Their Purpose & Mission!
 - And Begin Focusing More On Their Products & Their Plans & Their Productivity!
 - And This Happens To Churches As Well!
 - It Happened To The Ephesian Church!
 - Read 2:1-7!
 - Look At Each Church In Two Parts:
 - First Part: The Commendation Of The Churches!
 - Second Part: The Condemnation Of The Churches!
4. What Is The Most Important Focus Of A Church?
 - Its Program & Its Plans? Or Its Purpose?
 - When We Are So Focused On The Programs In The Church, We Have Forgotten The Purpose Of The Church!
 - This Is Exactly What Happened To The Ephesian Church!
 - They Were A "Working Church" (Dr. Stewart Custer) -- A Busy, Active Church!
 - And The Lord Commended Their Efforts! If Every Church Worked As Hard & As Much As The Ephesian Church!
 - But, While They Focused On Their Programs, They Had Forgotten Their Purpose!
5. How Can A Church Remember Her Purpose?
 - Remember A Few Things:
 1. ***Remember The Person We Are Serving!***
 - 2:1-2a - "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; I know!"
 - It Is Jesus Christ Himself Who Commands John To Write This Message To The Church In Ephesus!
 - Ephesus Was A Large City At The Center Of Life In The Roman Province Of Asia! (Population Between 250K - 500k!)
 - Center Of Politics! Center Of Religious Life (Artemis / Diana)! Center Of Commerce!
Center Of Finance!
 - Very Easy For A Church To Take On The Identity Of Its Culture!
 - See This Everywhere Today! Instead Of Influencing An Ungodly Culture, The Ungodly Culture Is Influencing The Church!
 - In Ephesus, The Church Began To Feel "Central" As Well!
 - After All, Paul, Timothy, John Themselves, And Other Prominent Preachers &

- Teachers, Came & Taught Them Specifically!
 - In Ephesus, The Church Began To Consider Themselves Central!
 - With Even A Sense Of Pride & Importance!
 - To This Church -- Self-Made & Self-Important -- The Lord Jesus Says: "Remember Me?"
 - "You Are Functioning As A Church -- But You've Forgotten Christ!"
 - Then, Jesus Identifies Himself In A Unique Way To The Ephesian Church!
 - And He Does So To Each Church!
 - To Help Them Return Things To Their Proper Place & Order!
- He Is The Real Power Of The Church!
 - "He That Holdeth The Seven Stars In His Right Hand!"
 - Uses The Description From 1:16a - With One Difference!
 - There He "Had" -- Here He "Holds!" - A Tight, Powerful Grasp
 - They Were Relying On Their Own Strength!
 - The Lord Is Showing Them That He Is Their Strength!
 - It Is So Easy To Rely On Our Own Strength Instead Of The Lord's!
- He Is Really Present With The Church!
 - "Who Walketh In The Midst Of The Seven Golden Candlesticks!"
 - Uses The Description From 1:13a & 1:12b - With Another Difference!
 - There He Was "In The Midst" - Here He Is "Walking In The Midst!"
 - Expresses How He Visits The Church!
 - Not Passive - But Active! Continually Visiting, Watching & Serving Each Church!
 - Expresses How He Values The Church!
 - Even Those Churches Who Have "Left Their First Love" -- The Lord Sees Them As Made Of Pure Gold!
 - It Is So Easy To Forget About His Presence When We Are So Busy With Our Own!
- He Has Real Perception Of The Church!
 - "I Know Thy Works!"
 - He Knows Everything Going On In Every Church!
 - "You Just Had To Be There!"
 - Well, He IS There & Sees Deeper Than Even We Can See!
 - It Is So Easy To Not See What He Sees!
- And We Need To Remember That HE Is The One We Are Serving!
 - Then, We Will Be Able To Focus On Our Purpose -- Because It Will Be His Purpose!

2. ***Remember The Plan Of Our Service!***

- Even Though The Plans & Programs Of Our Service Must Never Go Beyond The Purpose - There Is A Proper Way To Serve! And This What The Lord Commends Of The Ephesian Church!
 - 1:2-3 - "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!"
- There Is A Right Way To Serve The Lord!
 - With Real Christian Conduct!
 - The Ephesian Church Was A "Working Church!" (Dr. Steward Custer)
 - And Every Church Ought To Be A "Working Church!"
 - There Was Great Effort In Their Service!
 - "Works" - There Was Activity! Both In Their Worship & Their Service!
 - They Were Performing The Duties Of A Church! Went Further:
 - There Was Great Energy In Their Service!
 - "Labor" - They Worked Hard!
 - They Were All Very Busy & Very Involved In All The Services & Service Of The Church!
 - There Was Great Endurance In Their Service!
 - "Patience" - They Didn't Quit!
 - They Followed Through On Their Commitments!
 - If It Was Worth Doing, It Was Worth Doing Right! & It Was Worth Doing It

- Completely!
 - This Kind Of Service Is Important!
 - Every Church - Our Church - Ought To Serve In This Way!
 - Because It Takes Work -- This Kind Of Work -- To Be A Part Of A Church!
 - No 80/20 Church Here! How Much More Could Be Accomplished!
- With Real Christian Convictions!
 - The Ephesian Church Was Taught The Truth & Was Grounded In The Truth!
 - This Showed Itself In How They Dealt With Error!
 - They "Earnestly Contend For The Faith!" (Jude 1:3) & "Take A Stand" For The Truth!
 - There Was A Reaction To Error!
 - "Thou Canst Not Bear Them Which Are Evil!"
 - It Repulsed Them! Because It Stood In Contrast With The Truth!
 - They Saw Things In Black & White & They Couldn't Stand The Darkness!
 - Is There Toleration In Our Church? Or Is The Truth Worth Fighting For?
 - There Was A Resistance To Error!
 - "Thou Hast Tried Them Which Say They Are Apostles, And Are Not!"
 - They Took Action!
 - Like When A Tumor Is Discovered!
 - They Tested Their Words!
 - Using God's Word! And Also Their Works!
 - Matthew 7:15-20!
 - There Are Many Influential People Within The American Church Today! Many Voices!
 - In The Church / Community / Communications / Conferences!
 - Is There Testing In Our Church?
 - There Was A Recognition Of Error!
 - "And Hast Found Them Liars!"
 - They Called Them What They Were!
 - And They Identified Them! Both Paul & John Does This! Because The "Evil Ones" Are Dangerous & Need To Be Identified!
 - And Because They Are Liars: John 8:44 - "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it!"
 - Is There Teaching In Our Church?
 - This Is Also The Process A Church Must Take To Combat Error & Evil!
 - The Ephesian Church Did This & Did This Well!
 - This Is What Our Church Ought To Do Well - Because We Are To Be: "The Pillar And Ground Of The Truth!" (1 Timothy 3:15)
- With Real Christian Character!
 - There Was Not Only An Outward Strength - There Was An Inward Character!
 - There Was Strong Spiritual Fortitude!
 - "Hast Borne!"
 - They Did All The Could To Stand Against Error & Stand For Christ!
 - They Had Backbone! Do We?
 - There Was Strong Spiritual Faithfulness!
 - "And Hast Patience!"
 - They Didn't Give Up! They Couldn't Give Up! They Didn't "Bend!"
 - Standing For The Truth Is Hard!
 - And Many Times Very Lonely!
 - But This Is The Kind Of Character A Church Needs!
 - Do We Bend? At Being Stressed & Stretched?
 - There Was Strong Spiritual Fervency!
 - "Hast Labored, And Hast Not Fainted!"
 - They Were Not "Weary In Well Doing!"

- Nothing Could Keep Them From "Doing Their Duties" For The Lord!
 - They Were "Fervent In Spirit, Serving The Lord!" (Romans 12:11)
- Are We Bold? Or Do We Give Up Easily?
 - No Answer - Stop Praying!
 - No Salvations - Stop Witnessing!
- How We Serve, As A Church, Is Important!
 - And The Lord Commends The Ephesian Church For Serving In This Way!

Conclusion:

1. But The Why Is Even More Important Than The How!
 - And This Is Why:
2. Remember The Purpose Of Our Service!
 - The Ephesian Church Had "Left Their First Love!"
 - How Easy Is This For Any Church To Do!
 - Because, When We Are So Focused On The Programs In The Church, We Have Forgotten The Purpose Of The Church!

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