

The South Florida Avenue MESSENGER

A Friendly Church With a Vital Message Proclaiming the Unsearchable Riches of the Lord Jesus.
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SUNDAY SERVICES

Bible Study.....9:30 a.m.
Worship.....10:30 a.m.
Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Ladies Class.....10:00 a.m.
Bible Study.....7:00 p.m.

HOME OF

Florida School of Preaching
since 1969

MISSION FIELDS

Dub Hill.....Russia
Don Iverson.....India
Marc Veary.....Malawi, Africa
Graham McDonald..Scotland
J. Paguaga.....Honduras, C.A.
Joey Treat.....Pacific Islands
Ted Wheeler.....Ghana, W.A.

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IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY

Sundays @ 8:30 a.m. Check local listings

The Church At Ephesus: "Loyal but Lacking"

Brian R. Kenyon

John, while on the isle of Patmos, wrote the Book of Revelation. In Chapters 2-3, there are recorded seven letters to the churches of Asia Minor. Although each letter was written to a specific congregation, each is also applicable to us. Jesus Christ concluded each letter through John by writing, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev. 2:7 cf. 2:11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). The first of these letters was written to the church at Ephesus. The subtitle, "Loyal but Lacking," is adapted from Ray Summers (*Worthy Is the Lamb*, 1951).

Background of the City

Ephesus was a chief city located on the coast of the Aegean Sea. This city controlled one of the greatest harbors of its day. Ephesus was also on one of the most traveled trade routes. The city's population was about 250,000 in John's time. It was known as "the first and greatest metropolis of Asia," and the "Bank of Asia." Concerning religion, Ephesus was the center of cult worship to the Greek goddess Artemis (known as Diana to the Romans). The temple of Diana was considered to be one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Christianity had an impact on this city. Paul spent two years in Ephesus, and his Gospel preaching seriously threatened the idol-making trade (Acts 19:8, 10, 23-27). Timothy also spent time in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:13), and according to secular history, the apostle John spent the last days of his life in this city. There are many lessons we can learn from this letter to the church at Ephesus.

Relevance of the Writer

The letter is written by "He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands" (Rev. 2:1). This description of Christ ties in with the vision John earlier saw (Rev. 1:12-13, 16, 20). From this we know that Christ is present in the midst of His church, and that He is intimately concerned with each congregation. Sometimes, living in the fast paced twenty-first century, we lose sight of this fact. However, Christ is just as much concerned with His church now as He was then (cf. Heb. 13:8)!

(continued on page 2)

Christ's Evaluation

In assessing this church, Christ first praises her loyalty. "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary" (Rev. 2:2-3). Their works were good! The Ephesians patiently labored in the faith. Their loyalty also consisted of an intolerance of evil. They could not stand those who were morally and doctrinally impure, unlike the Corinthians (1 Cor. 5:1-2). They also exposed as liars some who claimed to be apostles (cf. Acts 20:29-30; 2 Cor. 11:13; 1 Jn. 4:1). Christ also commended them for hating the "deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate" (Rev. 2:6). Although little is known about the deeds of the Nicolaitans, we can know that loyalty to Christ not only consists of loving the good, but also hating that which is evil (Ps. 45:7). In their loyalty, they had not "become weary." Loyalty to God is not easy (cf. Lk. 9:23-26), and thus many have taken the path of least resistance (cf. Mt. 7:13-14). However, we, like the Ephesians, must "not grow weary in doing good" (2 Thes. 3:13).

Secondly, Christ points out Ephesus' lack of love. "Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love" (Rev. 2:4). The word translated "left" means forsaken. This forsaken love may have included one or all of the following: (1) the love for God's will that was demonstrated in the burning of the books on magic and the mighty growth of the word of God that resulted (Acts 19:19-20); (2) the love for God that was shown toward His messenger when he left the elders at Miletus (Acts 20:36-38); and/or (3) the love they showed one another in Christ (Eph. 1:15). In any case, a loss of love leads to a loss of enthusiasm, which is a dangerous condition (cf. Rev. 3:16). Do we love God more or less than when we first became Christians? Even if we love God now, there is always room for improvement (1 Thes. 1:3; 3:12)!

Christ's Solution and Promised Blessings

Christ did not only point out their sin, but He also told them how to correct it. "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" (Rev. 2:5). The church at Ephesus shows us that we can gradually slip into apostasy and not realize it until it is too late (cf. Heb. 2:1-4). Christ told them to "remember" the point at which they departed. Memory is a powerful trigger of repentance (Ps. 137; Lk. 15:17). Repentance is a change of will that results in a positive change of action (cf. Mt. 3:8); hence, Jesus said, "do the first works." These are the kind of good works that resulted from their "first love." Unless they repented and did these good works, Christ would "remove your lampstand." A lamp stand's purpose was to dispense light, but if it could not dispense light (like Christians who have left their first love), it has no more reason to exist. As the "light of the world," we must make sure our light also keeps shining (Mt. 5:14-16).

Jesus promised, "To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7). This blessing is pronounced only upon those who overcome forsaking their "first love." The blessing here promised is a restoration of that which was lost in the Garden of Eden—"the tree of life." As long as Adam and Eve had access to the "tree of life," they had immortality, but because of their sinfulness, God expelled them from the Garden, and thus also from the tree of life (Gen. 3:22-24). Immortality in a sinful condition is not good, but thanks be to the Lord, those who overcome will live eternally in the "paradise of God" (cf. Rev. 22:1-5).

Conclusion

We can be assured that Christ knows our every work, collectively and individually (cf. Heb. 4:13). He knows if we love what He loves and/or hates what He hates. Have we forsaken our first love? If so, may God help us to remember and repent before He removes our "lampstand." We cannot expect to live in eternal bliss without our "first love," but to all who overcome, the "paradise of God" awaits. ♥ *Brian*



PEW PACKERS EVERY SUNDAY EVENING AT 5:45

SFA FAMILY MATTERS

Prayer List

Our Members: Virginia Walker is home with shingles. Genifer Johnson's health issues and upcoming surgery. Sharon Washington, Cheryl Barker, Wanda Bruno, Ron Cox, Bob Cooper, Wayne Shearer, Faith West, Jim Turner, Bill Long, Ginny Hamby, and Margaret Coone.

Shut In Members: Carol Eason, Virginia Plumlee, Dick & Joyce Burbage and Sharon Edler.

Others: Harold Hooks (former member) has stage 4 stomach cancer. Lynn Stevens, Chrissi Fuesner, Joyce Stearsman, Ruth Brunson, Chip Bolding and Tim Wade (friend of the Kirklands).

Upcoming Events

- Saturday, August 18th:** Men's Breakfast at S. F. A. at 8:00 a.m.
- Saturday, August 25th:** Youth Ice Cream Social at 2:00 p.m. hosted by the Shearer family at their home.
- Sunday, August 26th:** Monthly Fellowship Meal. Wayne Shearer's team has set-up and clean-up.
- Sunday, August 26th:** Teacher Training Session at 3:00 p.m. in the library for the upcoming quarter which begins in September.
- Monday, August 27th:** Ladies Exercise Class begins, see flyer on bulletin board in foyer or call church office for details.
- Sunday, September 2nd:** Fellowship In Service after evening worship.
- Monday, September 3rd:** Labor Day Lectureship, hosted by the Sixth Street church of Christ, 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Lunch will be provided.
- Monday, September 3rd:** Labor Day Cookout. Games for all ages! Games at 2:30 p.m. Dinner at 5:30 p.m. Bring your favorite side dish and dessert.
- Tuesday, September 18th:** FSOP Ladies Class 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Hither, Thither and Yon

bettye bolding leaves today for an extended visit with her son Chip and family. She covets our prayers for them at this time. Several of our members will be traveling to Tennessee this coming weekend for Polishing the Pulpit (August 16th - 23rd). Please pray for their safety.

Responses

Wednesday, August 8th David Deal came forward repenting of sin and requesting prayer.

Sunday, August 12th Brian Smith put on Christ in baptism. Be sure to welcome our new brother!

Visitors

Johnny Davidson, Junior Erickson, Tiffany Hash, Margaret Khoury, Wadi Khoury, Veda Roach, Victoria Stetson and Jaxon, and Jenifer Wilson and Lamarion.

~ Communion to Shut-ins ~	
Aug 19.....	Help Needed
Aug 26.....	McShane
Sept 2.....	Kemp
Sept 9.....	Kemp
Sept 16.....	Help Needed

Need for Meals?

If you have a need for prepared meals after being hospitalized or having been ill, please contact Brenda Mask, Nona Williams or the church office.

SCHEDULED TO SERVE

August

Frank Hamby **Table** Fred Strickland
Chaz Hine **Assist** Bobby Simpson

Sunday, August 19, 2018
9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class..... Kyle Bingle
Prayer..... Josh Estridge

10:30 A.M.

Announcements David Williams
Song Leader..... Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer..... Charles Paulin
Sermon..... George Beals
Closing Prayer..... Tim Croson
Sound Booth..... Tucker Sweeney

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader..... Tucker Sweeney
Opening Prayer..... Alex Parramore
Sermon..... Jason Hendrix
Closing Prayer..... David Deal
Sound Booth..... Tucker Sweeney
Greeters McCarters (before) Williams (after)
Att. Cards..... Willcut boys
Open & Close Building Bob Pratt

Wednesday, August 22, 2018

Song Leader..... Casey Paulin
Opening Prayer..... Bobby Sheumaker
Closing Prayer..... David Deal

Please meet in the library. If you cannot serve, please call Stacey Paulin so he can get a replacement - (863) 838-8911

Sunday, August 26, 2018
9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class..... Jim Turner
Prayer..... CJ Grimes

10:30 A.M.

Announcements David Williams
Song Leader..... Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer..... Bobby Sheumaker
Sermon..... Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer..... Tucker Sweeney
Sound Booth..... Alex Parramore

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader..... Tucker Sweeney
Opening Prayer..... David Anderson
Sermon..... Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer..... CJ Grimes
Sound Booth..... Alex Parramore
Greeters Longfellow (before) Bingle (after)
Att. Cards..... Paul/Ian
Open & Close Building Bob Pratt

Wednesday, August 29, 2018

Song Leader..... Matt Willcut
Opening Prayer..... Jason Hendrix
Closing Prayer..... Bobby Simpson

~ HOW ARE WE GIVING ~

July 22	\$4, 705.00
July 29	\$5,380.46
August 5	\$6,852.52
August 12	\$5,546.63
Contribution Average.....	\$5,796.32
2018 Weekly Budget.....	\$4,887.98

Looking in the Wrong Place

I was recently at a church activity that lasted until 9:30 pm. As we were leaving, a visiting brother in Christ was locked out of his car. He was very surprised because he hardly ever locked his car and, besides that, he had one of those electronic keys that he thought was impossible to lock in his car. He looked in the church building where he sat, but could not find the key. He and the three passengers he brought engaged their flashlight apps and looked through the windows of the car from all sides to positively identify the key. Because no key was found, he did not want to call a locksmith, fearing that he still could not drive his car. Instead, even though it was quite a distance, one of the local church members agreed to drive him home to get his extra key then bring him back to the building. All five of them got in the full-sized truck. When the local church member started his truck and turned on the headlights, lo and behold, the stranded brother's car emerged from the darkness in full view! I thought, "Wow! How could they spend all that time looking in the car and not realize it was not the car they came in?" There was a big red umbrella between the front seats, a rearview mirror decoration, and items in the back seats that I would have thought should have clued them into realizing that car was not theirs. As I reflected, it occurred to me that many people do the same thing spiritually. That is, they search for salvation in man-made *(continued below)*



South Florida Avenue
CHURCH OF CHRIST
1807 South Florida Avenue
Lakeland, FL 33803-2653

Return Service Requested

The End of Your Search for a Friendly Church . . .



We rejoice with the angels that Brian was baptized into Christ, Sunday, August 12, 2018. Let's welcome our new brother in Christ and praise God for His plan of salvation (Mt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:38, 41)!

BEYOND
Our Best

Ladies exercise class to begin Monday, August 27, with Destyni Dindy. See bulletin board!

Thanks to those who filled-out the "vision/goal survey." If you have not, please do so ASAP so the Lord can do even greater things thru us!



(continued from above) religions, really believing it is there, but continually come-up short unknowingly at first, but when the storms of life hit, they become more frantic in that search. Hopefully, the light will come on and truth will emerge before it is too late! Jesus said, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me" (Jn. 5:39). Paul said, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Let us make sure we look in the right place, the Scripture, to find the truth that will set us free (Jn. 8:31-32)! ❤️ *Brian*

Many of our members will be at Polishing the Pulpit in Tennessee. Let's keep them in prayer. The entire church will benefit from their experience!