

## CHAPTER SIX

### RIGHT ASSURANCE AND CONFIDENCE

If our eyes are rightly fixed on Jesus, then we can certainly have the right assurance and confidence to run the race with perseverance right to the end.

Otherwise, we might think that we have the right confidence and assurance but the warnings from scriptures may question the reliability of such a conclusion.

We examined the message of the Lord Jesus to the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2. We noted that although the message was specifically directed to the church in Ephesus then, the principles apply to all of God's people and churches for all time. And this is also true for the messages of the Lord Jesus to the other six churches mentioned in Revelation 2. If we read through all the seven messages to the seven churches in Revelation 2, there is one common statement at the end of each message. The statement is: "*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*" It is as if scriptures are telling us to pay special attention to what the Spirit says to the seven churches; the messages to the seven churches are obviously relevant to the churches in yesteryears as well as to the churches today.

## **NO RIGHT CONFIDENCE IF WE LOSE OUR FIRST LOVE**

We saw how the Lord Jesus rebuked the church in Ephesus for having forsaken her first love for the Lord. The Lord warned this church to repent or else He would remove their lampstand from its place. From Revelation 1, we know that the lampstand refers to the church. A church no longer in its place means that the church is no longer functioning and the testimony and witness of the church is no longer existing. If we have forsaken our first love, we no longer can have the right assurance and confidence in our Christian race, not to mention anything about a right relationship with the Lord and a healthy witness.

## **NO PLACE FOR IMMORALITY, IDOLATRY AND WRONG TEACHINGS**

To the church in Pergamum, the Lord Jesus wrote: *“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”* (Revelation 2:14(b)). To the church in Thyatira, the message included: *“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”* (Revelation 2: 20(b)).

What was common to these two churches? – Sexual immorality, wrong teachings by false prophets/prophetesses and idolatry. The warnings were clear enough: the Lord

Jesus would not tolerate such development in His churches and judgement would be forthcoming unless there was repentance. The Lord God is holy and He expects His people to be holy. Idolatry does not just refer to the worship of idols/statues; anything or anyone that takes the place of God in our lives becomes an idol. The people are not to tolerate false teachings.

If all these are not corrected, we cannot truly have the right assurance and confidence in our lives. And such things take place principally because our eyes are no longer fixed on Jesus and our focus has shifted. We need to repent and correct the situation before it is too late. We must take stock of our spiritual state as a people of God.

## **NO PLACE FOR COMPLACENCY AND LUKEWARMNESS**

To the church in Sardis: *“You have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God”* (Revelation 3: 1(b)-2).

To the church in Laodicea: *“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold – I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing’. But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked”* (Revelation 3: 15-17).

Notice that the two churches, Sardis and Laodicea, had almost similar problems. Sardis was spiritually asleep, in fact spiritually dead, although she had a reputation of being alive. The Lord told her to wake up and strengthen what remained. Laodicea thought she was spiritually rich when in fact she was poor, blind, wretched, pitiful and naked, Laodicea also had another problem; she was lukewarm, neither hot nor cold. The Lord warned her that He was about to spit her out of His mouth. In all likelihood, Sardis also had a somewhat similar spiritual ailment – being half-dead spiritually and yet having a reputation of being alive would surely mean being neither hot nor cold as well.

Both churches had the wrong confidence. They thought they were very much alive spiritually and rather rich. Yet they were dying spiritually and were in a pitiful state. What is obvious is that both churches did not recognise their true spiritual state. They were oblivious to the reality in their lives! They could not see – they were spiritually blind. The Lord sought to awaken them to the real situation and to help them see. Sadly, their eyes were no longer fixed on Jesus.

Both churches were also luke-warm and lukewarmness can be a rather common problem in churches today. Being lukewarm would include being indifferent, complacent and presumptuous. Churches with this problem seem to be functioning as per normal but in reality, there is very little spiritual life present. They are just going through the motions, keeping the form without the life. Such churches are inward looking and they seek to preserve their own way

of life and functioning without much regard and concern for the lost world and the practical needs around. They have all the programmes and meetings though, but in terms of lives being transformed, there is very little movement. Yet, at the same time, they think they are doing alright; in fact, they may think they are doing very well. But as far as the Lord Jesus is concerned, He sees the reality and it saddens His heart.

Lukewarmness that gives rise to indifference also sees God's people not concerned for the defence of the truth and the preservation of the right doctrines. They are not willing to know the truth in all its totality for that would require disciplined study of scriptures. They are not bothered about lessons from church history, for that would involve time spent to examine church history. They are just willing to go along, receiving the teachings that are familiar to them and preaching which they are comfortable with. Those teachings which they cannot understand or those that are not acceptable to them are just ignored. At the heart of it, they are not willing to pay the price to preserve the truth that many had suffered for and died for in the past. They prefer not to get out of their "comfort zone" or to "rock the boat" as it were, even though the boat is already full of holes and is sinking. The fear of man and the unpleasantness of confrontation make it easier to just maintain the status quo, and the church of God suffers for it. The lukewarm and indifferent believers must know that there is no place for neutrality in the Christian life. The one who stands aloof from the good cause automatically helps the evil one and his evil cause.

## **BE FAITHFUL UNTIL THE END**

The messages to the last two churches draw a sharp contrast to those directed to the previous five.

To the church in Smyrna: *“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).

To the church in Philadelphia: *“I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name”* (Revelation 3:8).

The call to Smyrna was to be faithful, even to the point of death and not to be afraid of suffering. Similarly, Philadelphia, although she had little strength, was commended for her faithfulness to the Lord Jesus and her consistency in keeping the word of the Lord.

We can have the right assurance and confidence in the Lord as we press on in the Christian race if we remain faithful to the Lord even though it might involve suffering, pain and death. Although we have little strength, yet that does not mean we cannot be faithful – the church in Philadelphia can attest to that. Fixing our eyes on Jesus and keeping a right focus on Him would mean following Him and walking in His will.

*Then he said to them all: 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.'*

Luke 9: 23-24

There is no doubt that the Christian race requires perseverance, the preparedness to suffer for the Lord's sake even to the point of death and the willingness to deny oneself. The cross speaks of suffering and death. To take up the cross therefore means that we ought to be ready and willing to endure the worst that men can do to us, for the sake of being true and loyal to the Lord Jesus. If we are not prepared to leave our comfort zone and we reject any form of suffering and discipline that God allows, we are not truly His disciples. We cannot therefore have the confidence to remain faithful until the end. Fixing our eyes on Jesus, focusing on Him, the author and perfecter of our faith, must mean faithfulness to Him from start to finish, no matter what it takes and how long it takes (according to God's wisdom and sovereignty). Only then can we have the right assurance and confidence in Him; a confidence which will not disappoint us and one that will ensure that when we see Him face to face, we will not shrink back in shame. If we are true to Him in our lifetime, He will be true to us in eternity.

Such an assurance gives us the confidence in the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 8: 35-39:

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: 'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered'. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

*This is the confidence and assurance God want His children to have. Do we have it? Do we have reasons to be sure of this certainty? If we fix our eyes on Jesus and focus on Him, nothing can separate us from His love.*

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