



Diseases in the Service

Servants' Meeting

September 29, 2024

Overview

- Physical vs. Spiritual Diseases
- Condition of the Seven Churches
- Discussion of Condition of Each Church
- Diseases Pervade

Physical vs. Spiritual Diseases

- Awareness
- Diagnosis
- Acknowledgment
- Treatment

Service is a Body that Needs Our Attention

“so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another” (Romans 12:5)

- Our Responsibility
 - Healthy and functional
- Introducing Diseases

Condition of the Seven Churches

- Two were praised only; no criticism
 - Smyrna and Philadelphia
- But five were criticized
 - Ephesus
 - Pergamos
 - Thyatira
 - Sardis
 - Laodicea
- The five that had issues that led to diseases

1. Ephesus: Loveless Church

“Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love” (Rev 2:4).

- Losing Passion
- Everything is exciting at first
- At first, the target is clear
- HH Pope Shenouda after ordaining monks
- “not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord” (Rom 12:11)
- “for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica...” (2 Tim 4:10)
- “From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more” (John 6:66)

We have tremendous examples

2. Pergamos: Compromising Church

“Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate” (Rev 2:15).

- Doctrine (teaching) is important to the Lord
 - Always church opinion and traditions and not my own
 - Being careful to communicate my biases
 - Being based in patristic thought

2. Pergamos: Compromising Church

- Allowing yourself to be the exception
 - Two sets of rules: for others and for me
 - Justification of our wrong behavior:
 - “We have abandoned a light burden, namely self-criticism, and taken up a heavy burden, namely self-justification.” –St. John the Short
 - Neglecting the requirements of the service
 - Pick and choose

3. Thyatira: Corrupt Church

“Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols” (Rev 2:20)

- **Developing Pride**

- “Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate.” (Prov 8:13)
- My target shifts
- “Unless a man gives himself entirely to the Cross, in a spirit of humility and self-abasement; unless he casts himself down to be trampled underfoot by all and despised, accepting injustice, contempt and mockery; unless he undergoes all these things with joy for the sake of the Lord, not claiming any kind of human reward whatsoever – glory or honor or earthly pleasures – he cannot become a true Christian” –St. Mark the Ascetic

3. Thyatira: Corrupt Church

- Disobedience

“Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.” (1 Sam 15:22)

- Cornerstone of the spiritual life
- Monk's vows
- “Genuine obedience – which brings great benefit to the soul – comes when you act in defiance of yourself. Then the Lord Himself takes you in His arms and blesses your labors.”
-- St. Nikon of Optina

4. Sardis: Dead Church

“I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead” (Rev 3:1)

- Outward appearance but no life (double life)
 - “having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!” (2 Tim 3:5)
 - Like the fig tree
 - Empty cup / shell

4. Sardis: Dead Church

- No longer teachable and able to accept guidance/correction
 - “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield” (James 3:17)
 - No growth
 - Always a student
 - Nicodemus

5. Laodicea: Lukewarm Church

“So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth” (Rev 3:16)

- Service becomes routine
- Laziness
- Rejecting responsibility of being a role model
 - “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea” (Mark 9:42)

Diseases Pervade

- Pervade: spread through and be perceived in every part of
- Not limited to service
 - Family
 - Work
 - Social circle

Review

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