

## **To the Church of Ephesus - Pdt. Budy Setiawan**

The church of Ephesus of Asia, was a highly commended church that strived and grew in the midst of different kinds of pressures and trials that can test a church. Their location was strongly recognized as a merchant's metropolis, bustling with life and activity. Not only so, the city is also known for their monumental temple of Artemis or the goddess Diana, a space for the pagan during the time of John. However, even with a strong resistance to the church, the congregation of Ephesus persevered and endured patiently with doing what pleases God. Their works and faithful endurance as a church was highly commended by God.

For the church of Ephesus, it is always about remaining productive and toiling for the kingdom of God (v. 2). Their works are all before God and that he knows each and every ministry or works done for the glory of His name. Not only so, God also saw the church's ability to withstand and not let false teachers to infiltrate and lead the church astray. These positive pointers for the church are what churches today should also strive for. The encouragement we can learn from the church of Ephesus is to have the enthusiasm and passion for the works of the Lord.

The works of the Lord requires a wholehearted devotion and genuine humility to be an effective servant of God's kingdom. While without a faithful heart or with a lazy spirit, one will not be used by God for the expansion of His kingdom. It should be in our heart and mind that when we serve the Lord we should discern and consider how we can be a faithful steward of our time. Being a steward of our time means that we are able to prioritize and consider our resources like time to be used effectively for the glory of God. With that said, it can be irresponsible and dangerous for us if our lives begin to idolize our ministries and ignore our other responsibilities. In the case of students, it can be about focusing more time on ministries rather than his or her studies in university.

On the contrary, God had one rebuke for the church of Ephesus which concerns the hearts of the congregation. To observe the congregation, outsiders can say that they are fervent and passionate servants of Christ, but deep inside they have lost their first love (v.4-5). Though the church enthusiastically did all sorts of ministries and were filled with good works, John rebuked the church for losing the love for others and their love for God. The two factors go hand in hand, so without love to pump their hearts in ministries they will serve God, the church or others with a heavy heart. Following the rebuke, God would take away his lampstand from the church and will not turn his face onto the church. Above all, may we learn from the way that the church of Ephesus toiled for the kingdom of God and to cling on the words of God as source their source of truth. We should also learn that all we do, in every ministry or when we serve others should be driven and fueled by cherishing the love and mercy shown on the cross where Christ died. To realize the scale and weight of the grace that God has shown by sending His Son Jesus Christ, we will endure and serve God with all our hearts with hearts of gratitude and joy.

Keywords: Love, serving, enthusiasm.

Questions:

1. Why do you think a church which is hard working and has sound teaching can lose its first love?
2. From the 3 praises the church of Ephesus received, which is our strongest or weakest? What can we do to overcome this?
3. How can we revive our first love to God and our neighbors?