

Revelation 2:1-7

- Remember your first love -

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Foreword

- ❖ The prophetic message of Christ to the ancient church of Ephesus is important for the church of today.
 - Christ strongly urges the church to practice the first love.
 - The church represents the lampstand which was standing in the holy place of God.
 - At the same time, the church is shining forth the light of the good news in this world (Mt 5:16).
 - The church needs to be on its guard and examine and unmask false doctrines.
- ❖ It is a relatively short prophetic message, which calls for attentive reading and listening.
 - When this messages is heard or read, the Spirit of God is speaking!

The context, form and structure, theological notes, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline show some overlap with other sermon outlines taken from the Book of Revelation. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a “stand alone.”

Context

- ❖ The message of Jesus Christ to the church of Ephesus is part of the Book of Revelation. The Book of Revelation is like a large painting. You need to look at the whole in order to understand the details.
- ❖ A brief outline of the Book of Revelation:¹

Introduction (Rev 1:1-3)	
	The origin and command to write this Revelation down.
The Book of Revelation (Rev 1:4-22:21)	
Rev 1:4-8	The opening liturgical setting.
Rev 1:9-3:22	PART 1
Rev 4:1-22:11	PART 2
Rev 22:12-21	The closing liturgical setting.

- PART 1: The risen and exalted Christ and his seven messages to the seven churches in the Roman Province Asia.
- PART 2: The heavenly courtroom and the judgment of God, ending with the descent of the new heaven and earth.

Part 1 (Rev 1:9-3:22)	
Rev 1:9-20	The risen and exalted Christ reveals himself to John and to the churches.
Rev 2:1-3:22	The seven messages to the seven churches of Asia. Jesus Christ knows the deeds of each church and of each individual. He calls them to repent where necessary to prepare them for the things to come, which they need to overcome.

- ❖ There is much discussion about the date of writing of the Revelation.
 - Some commentators propose a date near the reign of Emperor Nero (AD 68).

¹ This outline for sermons is very brief and does not discuss all the (many) different theories about the structures and outlines of the Book of Revelation. Beale (1999) provides a detailed outline. For discussion see Garrow (1997).

- Others propose a date during the reign of Emperor Domitian (AD 81-96).
- ❖ In the case of the message to the Ephesians, the outcome of this discussion is of lesser importance. The Ephesians did not suffer persecution at the moment of writing. Their own faith was criticized. They were not prepared for “the great tribulation” (Rev 7:14).
 - The religious context of 1st century Ephesus is also important. See below.

Form and structure

Each message to one of the seven churches has the same basic structure:

		reference
Commission to write	Rev 2:1	
Presentation of the exalted Christ	Rev 2:1	Rev 1:16
Praises and commendations	Rev 2:2-3	
Call to repentance	Rev 2:4-6	
Call to listen	Rev 2:7	
Promise	Rev 2:7	Rev 22:2

Theological notes

- ❖ The Book of Revelation is trinitarian (God – Holy Spirit – Jesus Christ; Rev 1:4-5) in character.
 - God is the first and the last (Rev 1:8) – Jesus Christ is the first and the last (Rev 1:17).
 - Jesus Christ speaks to the churches (Rev 2:1-6) and the churches are summoned to listen to what the Spirit (Rev 2:7) says.
- ❖ The Book of Revelation is foremost a liturgical book with prayers, doxologies, confessions, prophecies and visions. It shows the heavenly liturgy in images and this liturgy affects the history of this world when the plagues of God strike this earth. Rev 4:11 explains why: **“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”**
 - The first priority in the life of every human being is to glorify God.
 - This liturgical book reminds us of the liturgy in the tabernacle (especially) and the temple of the Old Testament. This explains the many references to the altars and the priestly appearances of Christ and some of his angels.

- ❖ The Book of Revelation is also a prophetic book about the past, the present and the future. It sheds light on the past, the present situation of the seven churches in Asia Minor, and the future, culminating in the promise of the new heaven and the new earth.
 - From chapter 4 onwards the judgment of God is the dominating theme. He will do justice (Rev 4-5; Rev 6:10; Rev 21:1-15 and other passages).

Technical and hermeneutical notes

- ❖ Reading and understanding the Book of Revelation requires:
 - Profound knowledge of the Old Testament.
 - The books of Exodus and Numbers, Ezekiel and Daniel are of particular importance in this regard. These books bear relation to oppression and deliverance of the people of God (Egypt and Babylon).
 - Knowledge of the Greek-Roman world of the first century.
 - Knowledge of figures of speech, because of all the metaphors and other figures of speech.
 - Knowledge of the structure of Revelation (see above).
 - (Elementary) knowledge of Hermeneutics.
- ❖ John received this Revelation from Jesus Christ and at the same time, this Revelation reveals the risen and exalted Christ, who holds the keys of (life and) death and Hades (Rev 1:17). John understood the words he heard and the visions he saw, though sometimes they needed to be explained to him (Rev 1:19-20).
- ❖ John wrote down what he heard and saw in this book and sent it to the seven churches in Asia Minor, an important province of the eastern part of the Roman Empire. In these seven messages to the churches of Asia, Jesus Christ addresses major aspects of church life. He praises and rebukes them and gives them promises of the life to come. Christians, members of these churches, understood these messages. Twice, people are mentioned by name and they were warned against a movement called the Nicolaitans (Rev 2:6; 2:15), active among the churches. These Christians were far more familiar with the figures of speech used in the Revelation than we are nowadays.
 - Figures of speech are not always easily understood by 21st-century readers. Sometimes they are explained, more often not. Figures of speech allow for more than one explanation and application. That explains the multitude of commentaries and theories.
 - In the process of explaining and applying the prophecies of this book, the interpreter should ask himself two questions:
 - To which exegetical tradition do I belong? There is a plethora of traditions, especially in the Anglo-American World. To mention only three:

- Amillennialism;
 - Postmillennialism;
 - Premillennialism.
- Secondly, the interpreter should be aware of his own situation and of the local Christian community. What is my own political-religious situation and how does this situation affect my reading and understanding of the Book of Revelation?

Ephesus (see map of Asia – Western part of Turkey)

❖ **Ephesus** was a large seaport city in the Roman province of Asia. The Romans used Ephesus as the point of origin for measuring distances in Asia, portrays the continuing significance of this site as a travel hub at the period contemporary with the birth of Christianity. Furthermore, the city was also the hub of regional urban development. Beginning immediately with the reign of Emperor Augustus, Ephesus entered into an era of prominence and prosperity. It served as the capital of the Roman province of Asia and received the title “**First and Greatest Metropolis of Asia.**”



Ephesus is in the Book of Acts an important city for the spread of the Good News (Acts 18–20). The city served as a base of operation for Paul and his co-workers as they spread the Christian Gospel into the adjacent cities and regions of Asia Minor. The letters to the Corinthians were Religion was of great significance to the city of Ephesus. The city was the cult centre of the



Figure 1. Situation today.



Figure 2. Temple of Artemis, Ephesus, an artist impression.

goddess Artemis. Furthermore, the letters of Ephesians, Colossians, and the epistles of 1 and 2 Timothy shed light on the ministry of Paul in Ephesus and the Roman province of Asia.²

- Ancient coins reveal important historical information. This coin shows the statue of the goddess Artemis of Ephesus.³ (These are the artist impressions of the ancient world.)
- The temple of Artemis in Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.



Figure 3. Coin depicting the statue of the goddess Artemis

² Oster, R. E., Jr. (1992, p. 542-548). Ephesus (Place). In D. N. Freedman (Ed.).

³ http://www.livius.org/site/assets/files/2184/coin_artemis_ephesosmus.jpg

Exposition

Verse 1

❖ **“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write”**: The identity of the angel is unknown. It might be a heavenly being, but also a human messenger:

- **“a human messenger serving as an envoy, an envoy, one who is sent.”⁴**
 - By humans or by God; prophets.
- **“a transcendent power who carries out various missions or tasks, messenger, angel.”⁵**
 - By God.

The most obvious explanation is a messenger sent by John to the church of Ephesus, carrying not only this message but also a “copy” of the Book of Revelation in order to read it aloud in front of the congregation. So that the members of this church can “hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev 2:7).

- “In this letter the formal addressee is “the angel of the church,” singular, whereas the actual addressees are the members of the various churches, plural.”⁶

❖ **“These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands.”**

- Christ presents himself as the heavenly high priest “walking among” adds the idea of majestic activity in the midst of the churches.⁷
- The Lord Jesus introduces himself with a formula that the prophets in the Old Testament used to introduce prophetic sayings from God: “these things says the Lord Almighty”. This introduction occurs 21 times in the Minor Prophets. Similar words are used by Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Amos. This similarity demands that Revelation 2–3 should be seen as a group of prophetic messages rather than as mere letters.⁸
- “The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches” (Rev 1:20).
 - For the explanation of the seven stars and the angels, see the previous remarks.
 - Christ is holding them in his hand. He will protect them. He will send them. He will command them.
- The lampstands refer to the lampstand, which stood in the tabernacle and the temple (Ex 25:31-40; Zec 4:2; Heb 9:2). The lampstand is the symbol of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit (Rev 1:4), whose light shines forth in this world. The congregation and church represents the heavenly lampstand in this world.

⁴ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000), p. 8.

⁵ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000), p. 8.

⁶ Bratcher, R. G., & Hatton, H. (1993, p. 39).

⁷ Lenski, R. C. H. (1935, p. 84).

⁸ Beale, G. K. (1999, p. 229). See also Wallace, D. B. (2008, p. 328).

Verse 2-3

- ❖ **“I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance.”**
 - Christ knows all the deeds of the church. This should not surprise us because the church is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16) and the Holy Spirit knows what is in the minds of men. He dispenses his gifts (1 Cor 12: 7, 11). He is the Paraclete (Jn 14:15-17). And finally, all our deeds have been written in the books (Rev 20:11-15).
 - Deeds are not single acts but reflect a Christian attitude and behaviour.
- ❖ **“I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false.”**
 - There are probably two groups which are causing serious problems:
 - **“wicked men”** and
 - **“who claim to be apostles.”**
 - These wicked men might belong to the church in Ephesus. Those who claim to be apostles didn’t belong to the church.
 - These “preachers” presented themselves as apostles, missionaries, officially sent by a Christian Church. They didn’t belong to the twelve, but they falsely claimed to be counted among the apostles (2 Tim 1:11). They claimed to have apostolic authority.
 - The apostle Peter had already warned the churches. “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God’s elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia (Ephesus and other churches) and Bithynia.” He wrote in his second letter the following. “But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves” (2 Pet 2:1).
 - The apostle John wrote: “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 Jn 4:1).
 - The apostle Paul had to deal with false apostles in Corinth: “For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ (2 Cor 11:13).”
 - It is not specified, how the Ephesian Christians have tested these so-called apostles.
 - They might have asked questions about their credentials, their knowledge of Christ and the expectation of the second coming.
 - The apostle Paul had already warned the elders of the church in Ephesus:
 - “I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!” (Acts 20:29, 30).
- ❖ **“You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.”**
 - The problems that the church of Ephesus encountered persisted for some time and took a lot of energy.

- These hardships are not specified. “This need not refer to organised persecution, but to more general hostility and difficulties facing a distinctive, countercultural group within a city like Ephesus. Alternatively, it could be related to the internal ecclesial dissensions.”⁹
- **“For my name.”** As in many other places in the Bible, **“name”** stands for the person, and here the person is Christ. They are suffering for Christ’s sake, that is, they are suffering because they are determined to be faithful Christians. This indicates persecution, either the occasional kind inflicted by a pagan society, or else the official organized persecution started by the authorities.”¹⁰

Verse 4-6

❖ **“Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.”**

- **The contrast with the preceding verses is very sharp.**
- This doesn’t mean that love was completely absent.
 - Beale remarks: “The idea is that they no longer expressed their former zealous love for Jesus *by witnessing to him in the world.*”¹¹
- What is meant by “your first love.” Is it an answer:
 - “To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and **priests** to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever!” (Rev 1:6). In the Old Testament, the priests bore the responsibility for the “lampstand” (Lev 24:3, 4).
- Furthermore, the theme of love was an important theme in the letter of Paul to the Ephesians:
 - “For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord **Jesus and your love for all the saints**” (Eph 1:14).
 - “And I pray that you, **being rooted and established in love**, may have power, together with all the saints, **to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ**, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (Eph 3:17-19).
 - “Instead, **speaking the truth in love**, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Eph 4:15, 16).
 - “And **live a life of love**, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph 5:2).
 - “Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord **Jesus Christ. Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.**”
 - The writer of this letter exhorts man and wife to love each other (Eph 5:22-33).
- Love is also one of the main themes of the farewell discourse, which is found in the Gospel of John.

⁹ Boxall, I. (2006, p. 49).

¹⁰ Bratcher, R. G., & Hatton, H. (1993, p. 41).

¹¹ Beale, G. K. (1999, p. 230).

- “If you love me, you will obey what I command” (Jn 14:15). Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (Jn 14:23).
 - “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you” (Jn 15:9-12).
- Love is great command of the Kingdom of God.
 - “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” (Mc 12:29-31).
- **Without love:** “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor 13).
- ❖ **“Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.”**
 - *This is a very urgent call!*
 - There are three imperatives, “**remember**,” “**repent**,” and “**do**.” Swete calls these the “three stages in the history of conversion.”¹²
 - “**Remember**” is a continuous state of mind: “**Keep on remembering**,” “Keep on thinking about,” or “Never forget.”
 - “The verb “**to fall**” is also used of moral or spiritual downfall in Romans 11:11 and 1 Corinthians 10:12.”¹³
 - The love of the Christian community is a high standard.
 - “Passion for truth, especially religious truth, can so easily degenerate into an unloving witch-hunt against those with whom one disagrees. Hatred of deeds is one thing (see v.6), hatred of brothers and sisters something else entirely.”¹⁴
 - The same is true for an unloving witch-hunt against those who differ in Christian lifestyle. See Romans 14:1-1-15:7.
- ❖ **“If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.”**
 - The spiritual situation is severely endangered, when there is no communal love for each other and for God. It inhibits the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ.
 - If there is no repentance then Christ will remove the lampstand from its place. This might mean that the lampstand is taken out of the circle of seven (Rev 1:20) with six remaining. It might also mean that this congregation won’t be counted among the churches any longer.

¹² Swete, H.B. (1977, p. 27).

¹³ Bratcher, R. G., & Hatton, H. (1993, p.42).

¹⁴ Boxall, I. (2006, p. 50).

- Looking at the history of the Christian church in North-Africa, this is a very serious warning. The church of North-Africa was one a vibrant church and had brought forth men like Tertullian and Augustin and many others.
 - The (aorist) imperative **“repent” designates a decisive act: “change your attitude”** (Brazilian Common Language Version); **“turn back to God”** (Spanish Common Language Version). It is radical change, “and not just a temporary feeling of regret or remorse that does not include a determination to abandon the sin.”¹⁵
 - **“I will come to you.”** “This “coming” of Christ is not the final coming in glory, but his immediate coming to punish these unfaithful believers.”¹⁶
 - **Christ has actual involvement with the church.**
- ❖ **“But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.”**
 - The situation of the church is not hopeless.
 - We don’t know who the Nicolaitans were. They were another group, pretending to be Christian? Their practices contradict the Gospel.
 - They didn’t hate the Nicolaitans themselves, but their practices.

Verse 7

- ❖ **“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”**
 - Christ calls for obedience to the teaching of the Spirit.
 - **“Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near”** (Rev 1:3).
 - There is an identity between the risen and glorified Christ and the Spirit:
 - **“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you”** (Jn 14:26).
 - Matthew 11:15; 13:9, 43. This is also an indication that not all will respond positively.
- ❖ **“To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”**
 - **“overcomes”** is not only related to the specific weaknesses and sins which are found in the local church, but to all tribulations and oppression which might happen to the church. The believer needs to stand firm.
 - **“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death”** (Rev 12:11).
 - **“To overcome”** is an attitude to stay faithful to their testimony, resulting in victory.
 - Revelation 22:2: **“On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.”**
 - To dwell in the paradise of God means to live in the presence of God and of the Lamb (Rev 22:1).

¹⁵ Bratcher, R. G., & Hatton, H. (1993, p. 42).

¹⁶ Bratcher, R. G., & Hatton, H. (1993, p. 43).

Application

Verse 1

- ❖ Christ is walking amidst the lampstands: he is walking among the churches, also the church(es) in your village, town, province, country.
 - He is the head of the church.
 - He is watching over the church.
 - He is commending the church.
 - He is rebuking, warning the church.
 - He will intervene directly(!) when it is necessary.
 - The church is called to acknowledge Christ as the supreme head.
 - The church is called to look at and to listen of his words.
 - The church is a lampstand standing in the presence of God and in this world.
- ❖ The lampstand has a double reference. The lampstand refers to its position in the ancient tabernacle, standing in the holy place shining forth the light of God and the Spirit. The lampstand also refers to the position of the church in the society proclaiming the word of God.
 - “In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Mt 5:16).

Verse 2-3

- ❖ The Christian Church is called to test (new) doctrines and preachers if they are in accordance with the Christian faith as it is handed down from the apostles.
 - In modern times:
 - **Jehovah's Witnesses.**¹⁷ Religious movement which expects the imminent return of Jesus. Jehovah's witnesses believe in a one-person God. No Trinity. Jesus is the first thing God created. See also Adoptionism and Arianism.
 - **Prosperity Theology.**¹⁸ Belief that financial blessing is the will of God for Christians, and that faith, positive speech, and donations to Christian ministries will increase one's material wealth. Based on non-traditional interpretations of the Bible, often with emphasis on the Book of Malachi, it views the Bible as a contract between God and humans: if humans have faith in God, he will deliver his promises of security and prosperity.
 - It is also important to have some knowledge of the history of the history of the church. Ecclesiastes wrote: “What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which one can say, ‘Look! This is something new’? It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time” (Ecc 1:10) This is also true with regard to the (old) heresies
To mention some:¹⁹

¹⁷ Jehovah's Witnesses. (2017, August 16). Retrieved August 17, 2017, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehovah%27s_Witnesses

¹⁸ Prosperity theology. (2017, August 12). Retrieved August 17, 2017, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prosperity_theology

¹⁹ Kelly, J. N. (1977). Early Christian doctrines. London: Adam & Charles Black.

- **Adoptionism.**²⁰ Belief that Jesus was born as a mere (non-divine) man, was supremely virtuous and that he was adopted later as "Son of God" by the descent of the Spirit on him.
- **Arianism.**²¹ Denial of the true divinity of Jesus Christ taking various specific forms, but all agreed that Jesus Christ was created by the Father, that he had a beginning in time, and that the title "Son of God" was a courtesy one.
- **Docetism.**²² Belief that Jesus' physical body was an illusion, as was his crucifixion; that is, Jesus only seemed to have a physical body and to physically die, but in reality he was incorporeal, a pure spirit, and hence could not physically die.
- **Antinomianism.**²³ Any view which holds that Christians are freed by grace from obligations of any moral law. St Paul had to refute a charge of this type made by opponents because of his attitude to the Mosaic Law (Romans 3:8).
 - There are modern versions.
- **Donatism.**²⁴ Donatists were rigorists, holding that the church must be a church of saints, not sinners.
- **Montanism.**²⁵ The beliefs of Montanism contrasted with orthodox Christianity in the following ways:
 - The belief that the prophecies of the Montanists superseded and fulfilled the doctrines proclaimed by the Apostles.
 - The encouragement of ecstatic prophesying.
 - The view that Christians who fell from grace could not be redeemed.
 - A stronger emphasis on the avoidance of sin and church discipline, emphasizing chastity, including forbidding remarriage.
- **Pelagianism.**²⁶ Belief that original sin did not taint human nature (completely = **Semi-Pelagianism**²⁷) and that mortal will is still capable of choosing good or evil without Divine aid.

❖ **Love:**

- "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of

²⁰ Adoptionism. (2017, August 08). Retrieved August 17, 2017, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adoptionism>

²¹ Arianism. (2017, August 03). Retrieved August 17, 2017, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arianism>

²² Docetism. (2017, August 13). Retrieved August 17, 2017, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Docetism>

²³ Antinomianism. (2017, August 16). Retrieved August 17, 2017, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antinomianism>

²⁴ Donatism. (2017, August 06). Retrieved August 17, 2017, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donatism>

²⁵ Montanism. (2017, August 15). Retrieved August 17, 2017, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montanism>

²⁶ Pelagianism. (2017, July 31). Retrieved August 17, 2017, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pelagianism>

²⁷ Semipelagianism. (2017, August 13). Retrieved August 23, 2017, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semipelagianism>

love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph 4:32-5:2).

- “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love” (Eph 4:2).
- See also: Ephesians 3:17-19; 4:15, 16.
- ❖ **Patience or Perseverance** are main virtues of a Christian:
 - Christ calls for perseverance in Revelation 3:10 and 14:12. Perseverance as virtue is mentioned in Revelation 1:9, 2:19, 3:10.
 - Patient endurance is not a passive virtue; rather, it implies active resistance, a refusal to accommodate or accept the falsehoods of so-called apostles. “In Revelation 14:12 it is defined as keeping the commandments of God and holding firmly to the faith of Jesus.”²⁸
 - “For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to **perseverance**, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; **and to brotherly kindness, love**” (2 Pet 1:6-8).

Verse 4-6

- ❖ **“Remember.”** A church should keep its own history in mind. The same is true for the individual Christian.
 - To praise God.
 - To learn from mistakes.
 - To strengthen what is good.
 - To repent from sins.
- ❖ This is an urgent call to repentance.
 - A church should examine itself and strive for the first love.
- ❖ Although we don’t know anything specific about the practices of the Nicolaitans, we do know which practices God hates:
 - “Do not plot evil against your neighbor, and do not love to swear falsely. I hate all this,” declares the Lord” (Zech 8:17).
 - “I hate robbery and iniquity” (Isa 61:8).
 - “To fear the Lord is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech” (Prov 8:13).

Verse 7

- ❖ **“Hear.”** One can hear many sermons, which have no effect. Hearing means: take good notice and meditate and take the words to heart.
 - When the Word of God is read aloud (in the church,) the Spirit of God is speaking.
 - This means that a minister or anybody else is not allowed to select passages randomly to support his or hers own ideas.
- ❖ **“Overcome.”** Sometimes it is difficult to stay faithful to Christ, because of difficulties, disappointments, oppression, persecution, lies etc.
- ❖ **“Paradise.”** Promise to live in the presence of God (Rev 21:1-8; Rev 21:9-22:6).
 - “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the

²⁸ Resseguie, J. L. (2009, p. 86).

throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (Heb 12:2, 3).

- ❖ Access to the tree(s) of life is no longer denied (Gen 3:22-24).

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