

ALMOST Perfect! (Part 2)
Revelation 2:1-7: Letter to the Church in Ephesus

Thought for the Day: The Lord is pleased with those who are able to discern truth from error, and who also hate those practices which God hates.

I. The Greeting (2:1)

A. The Addressee

1 "To the angel of the church... - the pastor, the primary messenger of God's Word.

...in Ephesus write: - a city known for its immorality and idolatry.

- The believers in Ephesus were continually faced with the temptation to compromise.
- The secret to avoiding compromise is found in devotion to the Word of God, commitment to the Work of God, and making sure we maintain our Love for God.

B. The Sender

'The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand who walks among the seven golden lampstands.'

- The Lord knows each pastor and church intimately. He is sovereign – He exercises absolute authority, power and control over all the pastors and churches.
- We cannot and should not try to hide anything from Him!

II. The Commendation (2:2-3, 6)

A. They were hard working and persevering

2 "I know your works, your toil (labor to the point of exhaustion) **and your patient endurance...** - What are we doing to serve the Lord?

3 I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. – They were bearing up, not bailing out!

B. They were spiritually discerning and uncompromising

...and how you cannot bear with those who are evil but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false.

- They were intolerant of evil people in the church; they didn't allow sin in their midst to go unopposed.
- They were able to use the Scriptures to discern who was teaching and living according to the truth and who was not. (Acts 17:11; 20:17-32; 2 Timothy 4:1-4)
 - False apostles deny any or all truths about the identity and deity of Jesus Christ.
 - False apostles are motivated by greed, lust, or power.
 - False apostles distort or deny that the Bible is God's infallible, inspired Word.
 - False apostles refuse to be accountable to spiritual authority.

6 Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

- The Nicolaitans were compromising the truth of God's Word and joining in the evil

- practices of the culture around them, especially the sins of immorality and idolatry.
- Compromise with the world, conforming to the behaviors of the world, is not pleasing to the Lord. (Romans 12:1-2; James 4:4)
 - The Lord hated the practices of the Nicolaitans, not the Nicolaitans themselves. “Love the sinner, hate the sin.” The challenge is to speak and live the truth in love. (Ephesians 4:25)

Suggested Applications:

1. We face temptations to compromise with sin every day. We can resist temptation by being devoted to the Word of the Lord, committed to the Work of the Lord, and dedicated to the Love of the Lord.
2. God knows everything about us. We cannot and should not try to hide anything from Him.
3. We need to develop perseverance in our service to the Lord—we need to bear up, not bail out.
4. While absolutely avoiding a judgmental, hypocritical, legalistic attitude, we must be intolerant of evil people in the church (those who are openly practicing sin without regret).
5. On the basis of the Word of God, we must be able to discern between those who are proclaiming and living according to the truth, and those who are not.
6. We must avoid compromising the truth of the Word of God by joining in and conforming to the behaviors of the world.
7. We should cultivate a hatred of sinful practices while, at the same time, cultivating a genuine love for sinful people.