

The Wrong Kind Of Unity!

I love the book of Revelation! It's the only book in the Bible that promises a special blessing to the person who reads it and understands it and obeys it (Revelation 1:3). Revelation begins with a vision of the resurrected Christ in chapter 1. He is powerful, majestic, awesome, overwhelming and resurrected. John fell at his feet as a dead man. Therefore, the churches in chapters 2-3 must be holy. The church has an amazing calling- to represent Jesus.

Revelation 2:18-28 focuses upon the church of Thyatira. It begins with a description of Jesus. "These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass" (verse 18). Jesus has the x-ray eyes. He sees all! His feet of fine brass represent judgment. He is coming to obliterate sin.

In verse 19 this church is commended. Jesus says, "I know your works, love, service, faith and your patience..." Each of these is a rich New Testament word bespeaking a vital spirituality. The dimensions reach upward and outward, horizontally and vertically. This was a well-balanced church in every way.

Verse 19b continues, "...and as for your works, the last are more than the first." They were a growing, thriving, moving church. What could be better? Yet the very next word is "but." The word is a strong Greek adversative. It sets up a direct contrast.

Verse 20 says, "But I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and beguile My servants to commit sexual immorality and to eat things sacrificed to idols." Jesus had something against them- they tolerated false teaching. It wasn't enough that they were personally alive, holy and growing. These were good things and signs of spiritual health. But there was a vital, crucial, missing element. A body that does not fight off infection, whatever its other strengths, is not a healthy body.

Jesus rebuked the pastor (verse 18) for not sharply resisting and standing against a false teacher known as Jezebel. The pastor allowed spiritual cancer in their midst. An aggressive, virulent, doctrinal cancer was allowed to thrive in the church. All other great works don't cancel out tolerating false teaching. What the pastor allowed the church allowed.

Shepherding sheep involves feeding and watering and guiding. David in Psalm 23 mentioned the rod and the staff. The rod and the staff were used to fight off the wolves and bears even if it cost the shepherd personally. Failure to fight off predators and lay down his life meant he was simply a hireling (John 10:12-13).

In this postmodern age spiritual leaders face intense pressure for unity. This pressure is nothing new! C.H. Spurgeon wrote in The Essence Of Separation, "A chorus of ecumenical voices keep harping the unity tune. What they are saying is, 'Christians of all doctrinal shades and beliefs must come together in one visible organization, regardless...."

Unite, unite! Such teaching is false, reckless and dangerous. Truth alone must determine our alignments. Truth comes before unity. Unity without truth is hazardous. Our Lord's prayer in John 17 must be read in its full context. Look at verse 17, 'Sanctify them through the truth; thy word is truth.' Only those sanctified through the Word can be one in Christ. To teach otherwise is to betray the gospel."

In this relativistic, weak age perhaps it's too much to expect spiritual leaders to know the truth, believe the truth, embrace the truth, live the truth and, most importantly, defend the truth!

Great church, Thyatira. Good pastor. But- he wouldn't draw the line and so they didn't. They wouldn't enforce the edges. And Jesus had that against them.

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