

## Sermon #3: Stirred Not Shaken

2/4/24

### **BREAKING THE ICE**

- What impacted you most about this week's message?

### **UNDERSTANDING THE TRUTH**

*Read the Passage* (Revelation 2:1-11, the churches in Ephesus & Smyrna)

Having followed the Lord's command to "write the things which you have seen" (1:19), John now turns his attention to "the things which are" (chapters 2 & 3). In these chapters, Jesus evaluates local assembly of believers in seven prominent churches. He reviews their faith and works, including points of encouragement and rebuke. Notice the repetitive pattern as each church comes under the Lord's scrutiny.

It's also important to see that the seven churches (even with their various issues) have not been abandoned by Jesus. Instead, He is present with them, He walks among them. He carefully observes each one from all sides. He knows everything there is to know about each church. No praiseworthy quality or embarrassing imperfection will escape His notice. Even with their issues, these seven churches are of priceless value (gold), and they give light (much like the image of a city set on a hill as in Jesus' sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5).

The church in Ephesus was founded by Aquila, Priscilla, and the apostle Paul (Acts 18:18-19). Later Timothy, and then John had been its pastor. They were given sound doctrine and exceptional guidance over the years.

The church in Smyrna, however, was living under significant oppression. Smyrna was considered a wealthy city where education flourished. However, the non-believing Jews had begun to ostracize the Jewish Christians. Their businesses were boycotted causing financial hardship. They were openly hated and often abused for being Christ followers.

1. In the church of Ephesus, what are the three commendations (2:2-3, 6) Jesus points out? Summarize in a few words why you believe Jesus found the church of Ephesus praiseworthy?
2. What did Jesus find deficient in the church of Ephesus (2:4)? What do you believe this means? How could the church be recognized for good things while at the same time being rebuked?
3. What is Jesus' remedy for this church (2:5)?
4. Given what we can know about the church of Smyrna, why do you believe John was instructed to begin this letter (2:8) with these words?
5. John ends both letters with the phrase, "Whoever has ears, let them hear ... to the one who is victorious [or overcomes]." To whom do you believe John was referring (see 1 John 5:4-5)? How does this apply to us today?

## SEEING JESUS CHRIST

1. How do you believe the church in Ephesus abandoned their first love? How are we susceptible to the same condition?
2. Jesus pointed out three simple ways for the church in Ephesus to reestablish their walk...*Remember, Repent, & Repeat* (2:5). Is this valid for us today? How can we practice this directive?
3. Jesus states that “to the one who is victorious,” He will “give the right to eat from the tree of life” (2:7). What does this mean? How is it connected with the tree mentioned in Genesis 2:9?
4. Read 2 Corinthians 4:17-18. How do you see this displayed in the church in Smyrna?
5. Read Isaiah 53:5 and Matthew 20:28. Why do you believe God allows His children to experience suffering?

## MAKING IT MATTER

1. What did the church in Ephesus begin to value more than their first love (Jesus)? How can we fall into the same trap today? What in your life competes with your love for Jesus?
2. If evaluated like these churches, what do you believe Jesus would say regarding Austin Oaks Church? What would He say to you? What would He commend us (you) for ... what would He have against us (you)?
3. A question for contemplation ... **do you really love Jesus**, or do you love the “idea” of Jesus? Do you love the idea of having strong, correct doctrine more than you love Jesus?
4. What are some practical ways we can keep Jesus as our first love?
5. At times, we will experience suffering. Is there a difference in general suffering (for example, a debilitating medical condition or grief after the loss of a loved one), self-inflicted suffering (bad choices), and suffering for the cause of our faith? How does Jesus respond to each?
6. How should we respond when we’re suffering? What is Jesus obligated to do for you when you’re suffering?

## PRAYING FOR GOD’S POWER

“This is the confidence we have before him: If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have what we have asked of him.” 1 John 5:14-15

When we pray according to God’s will it engages the power and guidance of God to bring about our transformation. If we apply these things in our own strength, then it is just legalistic obedience. But, when we humbly ask God to change us and empower us according to His will and by His Spirit, it becomes transformational AND it glorifies God.

1. Ask people to share one key, specific application from today’s lesson that they want God to bring about in their life. Then take time to pray for each other in these areas.