

Sermon Preached at Harringay United Church-Baptist
On Sunday 3rd May 2009.
By Rev. Fred Onwuchekwa

Message: What kind of Church are we, loveless?

Text: Rev 2:1-7

PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

One of the reasons God has set up the church is for His people to love Him and to bear testimony of the work of the cross in the local community and beyond.

From the text above, the Lord introduces Himself to the church in Ephesus as the One who holds the seven stars (i.e. literally Angels of sent by God to the church or the pastor of the church – lets use the former) in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lamp stands (i.e. the churches). God uses the angels to observe what is going on in the local church. I.e. He cares about the condition of His church.

The question is - *what is the condition of the Haringey Baptist church? Or any other church. Can we truly say that we are a successful church in the eyes of the Lord? A songwriter sang a song that - Jehovah sees and Jehovah knows.*

THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS

v2.2 This church was commended for its plentiful works, its labour of love, and its patient endurance. It did not tolerate **evil men** in its midst. The church needs to stand up to evil or what is wrong in the church. (i.e. to those who cause confusion and disunity in the Church). The church was also commended for its ability to discern **false apostles** and to deal with them accordingly.

v2:3,4 Because of Christ, the church had **endured trial and tribulations with patience** and had laboured tirelessly. Hebrews 6/10 – says that God is not unrighteous to forget our labour of love. So God sees the sacrifices they are making.

THE PROBLEM

But the problem with the church is that they had left their first love. The zeal of the Lord which they had in the beginning was no longer there. They were probably caught up with activities and programs but

did not pay much attention to what mattered most - i.e. their relationship both corporately and individually with their God.

The fire of its affection had died down. The glowing enthusiasm of its early days had disappeared, their devotion etc.

He cautioned them to repent - The church, the members or the Christians should look back to better days when their love for Christ flowed warm, full, and free. They were still sound in doctrine and active in service, but the true motive of all worship and service was missing. They need to redevelop their love for God as David of old.

David said

- I was glad when they said unto me, come let us go into the House of the Lord (Psalm 121/1)
- I would rather be a door keeper in the House of the Lord... (Psalm 84/10b)

REMEMBER

2:5 They should remember the good days of their early faith, repent of their feigning love for God, and repeat the devoted service which characterized the outset of their Christian life. **Otherwise** He would remove the lamp-stand at Ephesus, that is, the church would cease to exist. Its-testimony in the local community and beyond would die out.

YET ANOTHER COMMENDATION

2:6 A further word of commendation concerns their hatred of the deeds of the Nicolaitans. We are not sure who these people are. One school of thought says that they were followers of a religious leader named Nicolas.

2:7 Those who have ears to hear God's word are encouraged to listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.

PROMISE

Then a promise is made to the over comer. Who is an over comer? - An over comer is the one who believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (1 Jn. 5:5), in other words, a true believer. His or her faith enables them to overcome the world with all its temptations and allurements. An over comer is one who shows the genuineness of his faith by repenting when he has backslidden from his first love.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION –

God wants us to be a successful church – what is a successful church

I. The church of the word (A Scriptural Church) (Bears witness Math 28/18-20) - those who have tested those who say they are apostles. The only way to test is if you know what the Bible says - e.g. the Church in Berea. (Acts 17/11)

A successful church in the sight of God is a Christ-centred church, Bible teaching, Bible believing, and Bible obeying.

II. A Serving Church – commendation for their labour

A. church that is not self-centred, they reach out to assist the less fortunate in their community. The members do not withhold their tithes and offerings unto themselves.

God is pleased and brings success to churches that show concern for the needy, the suffering, and the bereaved, the hurting etc.

III A Soul-winning Church – they have persevered for the Lord

The church should have a burden and zeal for the unsaved. Effort should be made toward evangelism.

The Great Commission admonishes Christians to spread the gospel to every one and every nation. Successful churches reach out to the lost with *bus ministries, special services, and personal witnessing (Matt. 28:29-20)*.

IV. A Loving church (i.e. Spirit-filled Church)

God must have first place in our lives and in our church.