Christ's View of the Local Church - Lesson #8

This lesson is a review of the past 7 weeks with the aim of helping us see how we can grow and mature in Christ.

Revelation 2 & 3

The Message to the Church in Ephesus
"Write this letter to the angel of the church in Ephesus. This is the message from the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, the one who walks among the seven gold lampstands: 2 "I know all the things you do. I have seen your hard work and your patient endurance. I know you don't tolerate evil people. You have examined the claims of those who say they are apostles but are not. You have discovered they are liars. 3 You have patiently suffered for me without quitting. 4 "But I have this complaint against you. You don't love me or each other as you did at first! 5 Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don't repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches. 6 But this is in your favor: You hate the evil deeds of the Nicolaitans, just as I do. 7 "Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. To everyone who is victorious I will give fruit from the tree of life in the paradise of God.

The Message to the Church in Smyrna
8 "Write this letter to the angel of the church in Smyrna. This is the message from the one who is the First and the Last, who was dead but is now alive: 9 "I know about your suffering and your poverty—but you are rich! I know the blasphemy of those opposing you. They say they are Jews, but they are not, because their synagogue belongs to Satan. 10 Don't be afraid of what you are about to suffer. The devil will throw some of you into prison to test you. You will suffer for ten days. But if you remain faithful even when facing death, I will give you the crown of life. 11 "Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. Whoever is victorious will not be harmed by the second death.

The Message to the Church in Pergamum
12 "Write this letter to the angel of the church in Pergamum. This is the message from the one with the sharp two-edged sword: 13 "I know that you live in the city where Satan has his throne, yet you have remained loyal to me. You refused to deny me even when Antipas, my faithful witness, was martyred among you there in Satan's city. 14 "But I have a few complaints against you. You tolerate some among you whose teaching is like that of Balaam, who showed Balak how to trip up the people of Israel. He taught them to sin by eating food offered to idols and by committing sexual sin. 15 In a similar way, you have some Nicolaitans among you who follow the same teaching. 16 Repent of your sin, or I will come to you suddenly and fight against them with the sword of my mouth. 17 "Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. To everyone who is victorious I will give some of the manna that has been hidden away in heaven. And I will give to each one a white stone, and on the stone will be engraved a new name that no one understands except the one who receives it.

The Message to the Church in Thyatira
18 "Write this letter to the angel of the church in Thyatira. This is the message from the Son of God, whose eyes are like flames of fire, whose feet are like polished bronze: 19 "I know all the things you do. I have seen your love, your faith, your service, and your patient endurance. And I can see your constant improvement in all these things. 20 "But I have this complaint against you. You are permitting that woman—that Jezebel who calls herself a prophet—to lead my servants astray. She teaches them to commit sexual sin and to eat food offered to idols. 21 I gave her time to repent, but she does not want to turn away from her immorality. 22 "Therefore, I will throw her on a bed of suffering, and those who commit adultery with her will suffer greatly unless they repent and turn away from her evil deeds. 23 I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am the one who searches out the thoughts and intentions of every person. And I will give to each of you whatever you deserve. 24 "But I also have a message for the rest of you in Thyatira who have not followed this false teaching ('deeper truths,' as they call them—depths of Satan, actually). I will ask nothing more of you 25 except that you hold tightly to what you have until I come. 26 To all who are victorious, who obey me to the very end, to them I will give authority over all the nations.

27 They will rule the nations with an iron rod and smash them like clay pots. 28 They will have the same authority I received from my Father, and I will also give them the morning star! 29 “Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.

The Message to the Church in Sardis

“Write this letter to the angel of the church in Sardis. This is the message from the one who has the sevenfold Spirit of God and the seven stars: “I know all the things you do, and that you have a reputation for being alive—but you are dead. 2 Wake up! Strengthen what little remains, for even what is left is almost dead. I find that your actions do not meet the requirements of my God. 3 Go back to what you heard and believed at first; hold to it firmly. Repent and turn to me again. If you don’t wake up, I will come to you suddenly, as unexpected as a thief. 4 “Yet there are some in the church in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes with evil. They will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. 5 All who are victorious will be clothed in white. I will never erase their names from the Book of Life, but I will announce before my Father and his angels that they are mine. 6 “Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.

The Message to the Church in Philadelphia

7 “Write this letter to the angel of the church in Philadelphia. This is the message from the one who is holy and true, the one who has the key of David. What he opens, no one can close; and what he closes, no one can open: 8 “I know all the things you do, and I have opened a door for you that no one can close. You have little strength, yet you obeyed my word and did not deny me. 9 Look, I will force those who belong to Satan’s synagogue—those liars who say they are Jews but are not— to come and bow down at your feet. They will acknowledge that you are the ones I love. 10 “Because you have obeyed my command to persevere, I will protect you from the great time of testing that will come upon the whole world to test those who belong to this world. 11 I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown. 12 All who are victorious will become pillars in the Temple of my God, and they will never have to leave it. And I will write on them the name of my God, and they will be citizens in the city of my God—the new Jerusalem that comes down from heaven from my God. And I will also write on them my new name. 13 “Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.

The Message to the Church in Laodicea

14 “Write this letter to the angel of the church in Laodicea. This is the message from the one who is the Amen—the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s new creation: 15 “I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other! 16 But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth! 17 You say, ‘I am rich. I have everything I want. I don’t need a thing!’ And you don’t realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. 18 So I advise you to buy gold from me—gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. Also buy white garments from me so you will not be shamed by your nakedness, and ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see. 19 I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference. 20 “Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends. 21 Those who are victorious will sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat with my Father on his throne. 22 “Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.”

Questions

1. Which description of Jesus at the start of each letter gives you the most encouragement?

2. Five of the seven letters start with a similar message from Jesus - I know all the things you do? In some cases, he lists negatives and for others he lists positive attributes of the churches. For you individually- what would be on the list of things that Jesus says he sees in your life?

3. Five of the seven churches are told by Jesus to repent. They are listed below and the conduct Jesus says needs repentance.
   a. Ephesus- repent for not loving God and others as you should.

b. Pergamum and Thyatira - repent for tolerating those in the church who eat meat sacrificed to idols and commit sexual sins.
c. Sardis - repent because their actions do not meet the requirements of God.
d. Laodicea - repent for being self-sufficient and not dependent upon Jesus.

If Jesus were to write you a letter, would he say you need to repent? Would it be one of the items listed above or would it be something different? What does/would true repentance look like in your life?

4. At the end of each letter Jesus gives a promise to those who overcome. Make a list of all the promises and put them somewhere that you will see them regularly. Let them serve to encourage you in your walk and to help keep you from those things which could prevent you from overcoming. We need to all be striving to overcome!!