

## What The Head (Christ) thinks of *His* Body (Church)

### Ephesus

**Positive:** *"I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary... you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans [false, immoral teachers], which I also hate."*

**Negative:** *"Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love."*

**Advice:** *"Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first."*

**Warning:** *"If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lamp stand from its place [customized judgment]."*

### Smyrna

**Observation:** *"I know your afflictions and your poverty – yet you are rich!"*

**Forewarning:** *"Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days."*

### Pergamum

**Positive:** *"You remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city – where Satan lives."*

**Negative:** *"You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans."*

**Advice:** *"Repent therefore!"*

**Warning:** *"Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth."*

### Thyatira

**Positive:** *"You have a few who have not soiled their clothes." I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first."*

**Negative:** *"I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols."*

**Advice:** *“Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan’s so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): Only hold on to what you have until I come.”*

### Sardis

**Positive:** *“You have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes.”*

**Negative:** *“You have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.”*

**Advice:** *Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God...Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent.”*

**Warning:** *“But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come [to judge you].”* I don’t think it’s my job to pass judgment on any church.

### Philadelphia

**Positive:** *“I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.”*

**Advice:** *“Hold on to what you have.”*

### Laodicea

**Negative:** *“You are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold – I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.”*

**Advice:** *“I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.”*

Christ acknowledges the imperfection of the established early church. But not one saint – weak or strong – was told to leave any of these churches. He has not given up on or abandoned the established church. Even when the church shows Jesus the door, he stands outside of it knocking to be let back in. He loves His Bride (Church). And failure of a local church or of a denomination does not bring to an end God’s organizational structure of or purpose for The Church.

It’s not only what I expect of my local church but what my church expects of me. In my early Christian life I was complaining to the Lord about the sad state of *His* Church. He set me straight. “If you know what is right and wrong in *your* church, why don’t you be the example?” He did not suggest I leave my church.

*“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another [to attend] and all the more as you see the Day approaching”* (Hebrews 10:25).

The Body of Christ needs me (a member) and I need the Body (members). If I don't fellowship bodily with believers habitually, I am crippling not only myself but also the church. I need to be using – *in the church* – the gifts the Holy Spirit entrusted to me. ◇◇◇