

LETTER TO EVANS

Int.

1. Aim: to show what a letter might be like if it was written to us here at Evans, using the 7 letters of Asia as examples.
2. This was not to be a typical Lord's day morning. On this Sunday, one of the elders rises up before the congregation and announces: "We have received a very important piece of correspondence. It is neither a letter from a neighboring brother or an apostle. It is from the Lord whose name we wear!" Soberly, with voice quivering and hands trembling, he carefully reads the contents. Authoritatively, yet lovingly, the Messiah methodically probes this portion of his body, commending and condemning where necessary. Spellbound, the brethren listen transfixed, knowing that they need to be transformed by their letter from the Lord.
3. What if Jesus composed a letter to this church? What would he say?
4. The 7 letters to the 7 churches in Rev. 2 & 3 form a composite picture of the church in any age.
 - a. These letters express general principles of life and conduct, religion and ethics that apply to all churches
 - b. Was written to real people in a real congregation, praising and condemning them in order to help them to be better.
5. This letter to Evans is not inspired but is taken from those 7 that are.
6. We will follow the general plan of the other letters.
 - a. Background of the community and the church
 - b. Introduction of Speaker, Words of Commendation, Complaints, Words of Advice and Warning, Words of Praise, and A Promise.

7. The Community of Evans

- a. Part of Columbia County in East Central Georgia.
 - i. Columbia County was created December 10th, 1790 from the northern part of Richmond County. And some land was added from McDuffie county.
 - ii. It is named for Christopher Columbus
 - iii. It has grown from 9,525 in 1950 to more than 100,000 in 2004.
- b. Evans is named for one of the area's first settlers, Gen. George W. Evans, and was located along the C&WC Railroad, which had an Evans depot.
 - i. Early maps of the area frequently misspelled the community as "Evens," and some referred to the area as Jenkins or Maysville Station.
 - ii. In the Evans census of 2000, there were 17,727 people, 6,319 households, and 4,973 families residing in the Evans area. But it has grown much larger now.
 - iii. For the most part the citizens believe in God and the Bible, and in Jesus as the Son of God. It is a religious community.

8. The Church at Evans

- a. Established - 1989 - formerly the Wheeler Road congregation
- b. Several Charter members
- c. This building was completed in 1989. New addition with more classrooms was added a few years later, and a fellowship hall added in 2004.
- d. Our membership at the present time is 91.
- e. Our average attendance in 2005 was 89 for Sunday Morning, 75 PM, 67 Wed.

9. This letter to the church at Evans is written to real people in a real congregation

Discussion

I. INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER

- A. The speaker(Christ) of each letter always introduced himself
 - 1. He identified himself in different ways
 - 2. It depended upon the condition of the church
 - 3. Pergamos - "Hath the sharp sword with two edges" because they had false doctrine
- B. "And to the Angel of the Church at Evans write: These things saith he who hath his eyes like a flame of fire and his feet are like fine brass."
 - 1. This was the introduction given to Thyatira
 - 2. Eyes like flame of fire signifies that the writer, Christ, sees and knows all about us here at Evans
 - 3. Feet like fine brass indicates his strength and dependability to help the righteous and oppose the sinners.

II. WORDS OF COMMENDATION

- A. "I Know thy works, and thy determination to stand for the truth in this day of liberalism, and how thou hast emphasized the need for Bible Study."
- B. I Know thy WORKS : Christ knows what we are doing
 - 1. OUTREACH -
 - a. He knows that we have several members actively involved in visiting as commanded in Jas. 1:27, & Mt.25:31-46
 - b. He knew about the Monday Night for the Master program that helped in many ways

2. COMPASSION - for the poor sick, bereaved - help with many good works locally and wherever needed - help with the Raintree children's home- Valdosta - special needs when they arise.
 3. MISSION WORK - you are helping with
 - a. Jamaica - David Henry
 - b. Caribbean, Cuba and Russia - James Andrews
 - c. India - Jim Waldron
 - d. Panama - various preachers
 - e. T.V. - Search for the Lord's Way - Mack Lyon
 - f. House to House - Printed literature to neighborhood - 6 times a year
 - g. Seek Ye The Old Paths - Monthly periodical for members
 4. PERSONAL WORK -
 - a. There are several in this congregation who are capable workers
 - b. They can teach the truth to the lost
- C. Christ knows the stand we have for the truth in this day of LIBERALISM and CHANGE AGENTS
1. Many false doctrines have reared their ugly heads over the years. Such as: Pentecostalism, Divorce for any reason, open fellowship, use of instrumental music, Women Preachers
 2. The church here has stood firm for the truth in all of these departures
 3. Tit.1:9 "holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught..." the church here has held fast to the faithful word
 4. Some want to change the church into a denomination - but this congregation will not tolerate changing God's way

- D. Emphasized the need for Bible study
 1. We have classes for everyone to study the Bible
 2. Encourage private study by each individual.
 3. Working to improve educational program which is the future of the congregation.
- E. He knows that we are working on plans for setting the church in order by appointing elders and deacons.

III. COMPLAINT

- A. "Nevertheless I have a few things against thee, because you have some who have left their first love, some who have become worldly and covetous, a few who have fallen away in need of being disciplined, and some who would tolerate error."
- B. Some have left their "first love"
 1. Those who do not attend all services faithfully indicate a lack of love - Heb. 10:25
 2. When one does not read and study his Bible it also means he is losing that first love!
 3. Instead of being involved in the work of the church there are some who would criticize & find fault.
- C. Some are becoming "worldly"
 1. Worldly is a term used to describe many sins
 2. I Jn. 2:15-17
 3. It would include - immodest apparel, profanity, drinking, gossiping and other misuses of the tongue
 4. Those members who profess Christianity but live for the world are merely hypocrites.

5. Some are covetous
 - a. A few do not give as they have been prospered as commanded in 1 Cor. 16
 - b. Lovers of Money - do not lay up treasure in heaven but upon earth.

D. Some have fallen away

1. Those who loose their first love, will gradually become worldly and then fall away.
2. There are several members who are no longer attending - they have become weak and worldly and backslidden
3. They are walking disorderly - II Thes. 3:6
4. We must not be so patient that we become tolerant of evil. There comes a time when church discipline must be practiced!!

E. Some who would tolerate error

1. A few in this congregation would fellowship anyone and see no wrong in denominationalism
2. They would not teach the error but they would not defend the truth
3. Of course there is a difference between loving people and loving their error and we must not confuse them.
4. Even as we oppose error we must do it with an attitude of love and meekness like Jesus.
5. "But speaking the truth in love,..." Eph. 4:15

IV. WORDS OF ADVICE & WARNING

- A. "Repent and do the first works, take a stand for what is right, or else I will remove thy candlestick out of its place."
- B. Repent & do the first works
 - 1. Change mind & life
 - 2. Come back to that first love
 - 3. Turn from WORLDLINESS -
 - 4. All of us must give as we have been prospered
 - 5. Get involved in the work and quit criticizing. Critics generally do not work.
 - 6. Restore the visiting and work of Monday night for the Master or some way of visiting
 - 7. Get involved in personal evangelism - teaching the lost in our community
- C. Remove candlestick
 - 1. If we were to allow sin to run loose it would destroy the congregation
 - 2. The same thing would happen to us as happened to those churches in Asia. They became EXTINCT!
 - 3. If we do nothing then we will be destroyed !

V. WORDS OF PRAISE

- A. "I do have some things about the church at Evans which are worthy of praise. You are a friendly, united congregation. You have a group of members who give liberally. You have several with great ability. Your worship services are meaningful. You have some faithful Bible class teachers. Your families are for the most part doing a good job rearing their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

B. The congregation

1. Is friendly
2. Is united - Ps. 133:1
3. Has brotherly love for one another - watch the way members greet one another and love to come early and stay late visiting with one another. Many eat together and visit and do things together as brothers and sisters in Christ.
4. Has many liberal givers - give cheerfully
5. Worships in spirit and truth - almost all take part in singing- many good song leaders
6. Bible classes - some of you have been teaching for years - studied and prepared

C. Individual praise

1. Families for the most part are doing a good job
 - a. Husbands and wives who have genuine love for each other
 - b. Training their children
 - c. Faithful young people
2. Have many people who are willing to participate in the work of the church

VI. PROMISE

- A. "Those who overcome the problems of sin and remain faithful shall receive a crown of life."
- B. The book of Revelation is a book of encouragement and good cheer. Even though the letters criticized the faults they always ended with a note of encouragement. There was a promise of a great blessing if they would overcome.

1. Ephesus - eat of the tree of life
2. Smyrna - not to be hurt of the second death
3. Pergamos - to eat of the hidden manna
4. Thyatira - will I give the morning star
5. Sardis - not blot out his name from book of lie
6. Philadelphia - pillar in the temple of God
7. Laodicea - to sit with me in my throne

- C. The church at Evans has a lot of potential - but we must not rest on past accomplishments but keep on working and doing the will of God.

CONCLUSION

1. The letter to Evans is really a composite of all the 7 letters to the 7 churches
 2. It is to help us see our strengths and weaknesses
 - a. To encourage us to do more of the good things
 - b. To warn us to turn from all that is wrong!
 3. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches."
 4. The church at Evans can continue to grow and be stronger if each of us will do our part!
 - a. Work & Study
 - b. Repent & come back
 - c. Live faithfully
 - d. Obey the truth - Stand up for the truth
 - e. Teach the truth to the lost
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Sermon by Arthur Pigman -
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