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Facing the Same Challenges

I have just returned from an amazing 10 days in Turkey and witnessed first hand some of the sites where the early Church took root. But as I found out with other members of the PFF team, the early Church faced challenges similar to challenges we still face today. For example, we visited the sites where the Apostles John and Paul visited and lived during their times in an ancient area called Asia Minor. It was while we were in Laodicea that I was particularly struck by the words of Jesus as recorded by the Apostle John in the third chapter of the book of Revelation. Listen to them with me:



Dan and his mentor, Harold Kurtz, former head of PFF.

"Write this letter to the angel of the church in Laodicea . This is the message from the one who is the Amen.....I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other! But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth!"

The Apostle John most likely lived to be 100 years old. He was living when the first century became the second century, when the Church of Jesus Christ was in its infancy stage and growing slowly. But, by 95 A.D., when the above words were most likely written, the Church of Jesus Christ was beginning to show signs of waning from its original passion and love for the Lord.

So, there I stood walking down this old Roman road in the old city of Laodicea , contemplating these words from the book of Revelation. The Apostle John was warning people of this country now called Turkey, reminding them of their first love. He was pleading with the Laodiceans not to give into their wealthy surroundings and let the culture soften their passion for spreading the Word and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is humbling to think that the Laodiceans and other cities in Turkey eventually did give into the prevailing messages of their culture; so much so that the Arab Muslims walked into the country and, in effect, wiped out the established Church of the day, giving rise to perhaps the strongest Islamic government ever to rule on earth: the Ottoman Empire.

How could this happen? Asia Minor was at one point filled with Christians. But almost overnight, historically speaking, Christianity was wiped out there by the message of Muhammad.

There is only one gear in the Christian life: forward. Anytime we put ourselves in neutral, we begin slipping backwards. Anytime a church becomes more concerned with its own self-maintenance and care rather than the mission in the world to which it has been called, it will begin to slip backwards and slowly die. For these reasons, Jesus was warning the people of Laodicea through the Apostle John to dig deeper into their first love and not listen to the sirens of the world.



There are many who believe, and I am among them, that the rise of Islam in the world is the result of a relaxed Church needing a severe wake-up call. Muslims almost believe in the divinity of Christ, but fall short in many obvious ways; they can almost grasp the idea of the

Trinity, but in the end reject it. To the extent the Church gets too relaxed and cozy with its surrounding culture, God has His ways of making life more difficult until the believer comes back home to his or her original passion and love for the Lord and His Good News.

Pressure from the Islamic world causes Christians to be concerned and hopefully begin to reexamine the precious truth claims of their own faith. I see this happening in the United States . The more violence and truth claims which descend on the United States from the Muslim world, the more I see relaxed baby boomers willing to pick up their Bibles and begin to reexamine its truths for the first time in years. Was the Apostle John correct when he called Jesus the Alpha and Omega, the great Amen? Was Jesus indeed the Living Water, eternal life, the most precious truth the world has ever seen or will ever see? Was he indeed God?

My prayer is for the people of Laodicea and all of modern-day Turkey to return to their original passion for our Lord. It is never too late to repent, to turn around and say .I was wrong. . It is never too late to read the Book of Revelation and see our own lives in the story of the Laodiceans. Have you become too relaxed in your own faith? How are you doing with your call to find your own mission within the Body of Christ -- to give the Gospel away to your neighbor and world in need? There is only one gear in the Christian life . forward; we must give away what has freely been given to us



Dan with his PFF colleagues in Turkey

Please continue to pray for the role I and my PFF team are to play in Turkey as we have now returned to our homelands. The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Pray that the Body of Christ worldwide develops a passion for the people of Turkey, so these precious people repent and return to their original passion for our Lord, Jesus Christ.