

YOUR FIRST LOVE

REVELATION 2:1-7

Text:

Introduction:

Ephesus was a large important city on the west coast of Asia Minor where the apostle Paul founded a church.

A number of factors contributed to the prominence that Ephesus enjoyed.

The first factor was economics. Ephesus was the most favorable seaport in the province of Asia and the most important trade center west of Tarsus.

Another factor was size. Ephesus was the largest city in the province, having a population of perhaps 300,000 people.

A third factor was culture. Ephesus contained a theater that seated an estimated 25,000 people.

The fourth, and perhaps most significant, reason for the prominence of Ephesus was religion. The Temple of Artemis (or Diana,) at Ephesus ranked as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

The history of Christianity at Ephesus began about a.d. 50, perhaps as a result of the efforts of Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:18).

Paul came to Ephesus in about a.d. 52, establishing a resident ministry for the better part of three years (Acts 20:31).

During his Ephesian ministry, Paul wrote 1 Corinthians (1 Cor. 16:8). While there Paul encountered great opportunities and great dangers.

He baptized believers who apparently came to know the gospel through disciples of John the Baptist (Acts 19:1–5), and he countered the strong influence of magic in Ephesus (Acts 19:11–20).

At the time that John penned these words the church at Ephesus was busy working for the Lord but had no sincere love for Him. They had programs without passion. They were a busy church with great statistics, but a church drifting away from heartfelt devotion to Christ.

Ephesus was a busy church with high spiritual standards. The work had been difficult but they had not fainted. Looking from the outside, in most every way this church was a successful church.

But not so visible seen from the outside, they had left not lost their first love.

We need to remember that Christ is more concerned about what we do with Him than what we do for Him.

Labor is no substitute for love.

To the citizens this church was successful, but to Christ it had fallen.

You may be asking yourself what does this have to do with Thanksgiving? The truth is our gratitude is connected to our love of the Lord.

Note:

1. THEIR REPUTATION

The Lord begins His remarks to this church by talking about all that is right with this congregation. They had a lot going for them and the Lord lets them know that He has seen all the good they are doing in His Name. He comes to them with words of commendation.

A. He commends their service.

Revelation 2:2 (KJV)

²I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

1. Works – This word speaks of “that which has been accomplished”. It refers to the fact that this church has accomplished much for the glory of the Lord. They have been working and Jesus has seen it all.
2. Labor – This word literally means “a beating”. It speaks of “intense work coupled with toil and trouble.” It tells that this church was serving the Lord fervently. This was no Sunday morning only crowd. They were actively serving the Lord at great personal expense and great personal sacrifice.
3. Patience – This word speaks of “steadfast endurance”. It tells us that this church was working in spite of opposition. The people in Ephesus did not appreciate these people or their zeal for the Lord and they opposed them publicly and physically; but these people endured the opposition and the persecution and they continued to serve the Lord faithfully in spite of everything thrown against them.

B. He commends their separation

Revelation 2:2 (KJV)

² I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

C. He commends their standards

Revelation 2:2 (KJV)

² I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

Revelation 2:6 (KJV)

⁶ But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Note:

Nicolaitans – was a separation of the clergy and the laity. Much of what we see happening in the Catholic religion today. What started out as deeds here at Ephesus became doctrine in Pergomos.

D. He commends their steadfastness

Revelation 2:3 (KJV)

³ And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

2. THE REALITY

After offering this church some words of commendation, the Lord now gives them some words of condemnation.

Revelation 2:4 (KJV)

⁴Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

A. His disappointment

While they look good on the surface, there are problems in the heart that must be dealt with. Jesus let them know that this is a personal matter. It seems that He is grieved by the problems He sees in this church.

B. His diagnoses

1. They had left their first love.

Jesus looks at these people whom He loves and for whom He died and tells them that they simply do not love Him like they used to. It would break our hearts if our spouse said that to us. Would it faze us if we knew the Lord felt that way?

The church of Ephesus was active in the Lord's work, but they were serving out of a sense of duty and not

out of a fervent love for Him. They had become like Martha, she labored, but not out of love.

Luke 10:38-42 (KJV)

³⁸ Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. ³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. ⁴⁰ But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. ⁴¹ And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: ⁴² But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

3. THE REMEDY

The Lord has not come to hurt them; He has come to help them! He offers a word of commendation, a word of condemnation, now He speaks a word of correction. He tells them how they can fix that which is wrong in their church.

Revelation 2:5 (KJV)

⁵ Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

A. Remember

1. Remember the day we were saved.

He wants them to remember that moment when they came to know Him.

He wants them to reflect on what He did for them. He wants them to recall all the excitement and emotion of those early days with Him.

He want them to look back to a time when their love for Him motivated everything they did.

Some of us need to remember.

Some of us have been saved so long that we have lost the thrill of those early days.

Can you remember what it was like when you first came to Jesus and the weight of your sins was lifted from your heart?

Can you remember when your heart was tender and you felt at home in the altar talking to Him.

Can you remember? Take a minute and reflect on how it used to be. Now, look at how it presently is.

Can you honestly say that you are still in love with Jesus today?

B. Repent

Revelation 2:5 (KJV)

⁵Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent,

and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

The word “repent” speaks of “a change of mind that leads to a change of action”.

The same counsel needs to be heeded by the modern church today. We have allowed everything in the world to come before the Lord. Family, fun, work, even church work has all taken His place in our hearts. We need to get back to our altars, reclaim that emotional, extravagant first love and fall head over heels in love with Jesus one more time. How long has it been since you confessed a lack of burning love for Him? How long has it been since you were open and unashamed in your expressions of love for the Master? We need to repent of our coldness and fall in love with Jesus afresh and anew.

C. Repeat

Revelation 2:5 (KJV)

⁵ Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

Illustration:

Remember when you met your spouse. You wanted to do anything that you could do to make them happy.

You remember that first love? But as time went on things began to change. Instead of trying to do things in an effort to make them happy, you began to expect them to do the things that make you happy.

Why?

You have left your first love.

When we leave our first love we cease from doing the first works.

When we leave our first love we begin to expect instead of being grateful for the blessings in this life.

When we leave our first love we begin to grumble and gripe instead of praise the Lord.

Close:

The Lord also speaks to this church of removal.

Revelation 2:5 (KJV)

⁵Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

If they refuse to get where they need to be, the Lord tells them that He is willing to extinguish their candle.

That is just what He did at Ephesus too! They failed to heed the message and He took away their light.

Now, there is no great Christian work in that city. There is nothing there but ruins and rubble.

Have you left your first love?

Our gratitude is connected to our love of the Lord.

Can you honestly say that you are filled with fervent, emotional, extravagant love for the Lord; or, would you have to say that your heart has gotten cold; that your zeal is not what it used to be; that you need to remember, repent and repeat the first works?