

# You Have Left Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

As we begin an examination of the letters Jesus gave through John to the seven churches listed in chapters two and three, keep a few things in mind. First, Jesus has a specific message for each of these churches. Clearly these messages indicate Jesus knows the condition of his church in each city, and in each region of the world right down to the local congregations in those cities and regions. He knew their condition in the apostolic era, and he knows their condition today.

Next, keep in mind our Lord's messages to the churches in John's day have great application today. We need to have an ear to hear what the Spirit is saying to us through this written word. Like the churches in the apostolic era, we are prone to the same spiritual problems that beset them. As well, we can learn from the commendations our Lord gives to these churches. We need to follow the good example they provide, and we need to avoid the spiritual problems that displeased the Lord.

Now look with me at Revelation chapter two, verse one as we read through verse seven:

*“Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;*

*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:*

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

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

*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.*

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

*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”*

In this first letter Jesus addresses the church of Ephesus. During the apostolic era Ephesus was the center of Grecian culture, a culture dominated by idolatry. The great temple to the goddess Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, was located in Ephesus.

Ephesus was a very immoral city. Earlier when Paul wrote his epistle to the Ephesians, he taught them to *“have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove (or expose) them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.”*

Although the city was steeped in idolatry and associated immorality, Paul carried on extensive ministry there for a period of three years. During that time the Bible says all Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. Many were converted and in time the apostle John moved to Ephesus. History indicates he stayed for some thirty years serving as the lead Pastor of the Ephesian church. I am sure John listened intently to the message Jesus had for this church of which he was a part.

In verses two and three Jesus commends them for their works, their labor, and their patience. He also commends them for not tolerating evil and for exposing false

apostles. He then expresses again his pleasure with their persistence and how for his name's sake they labored and did not grow weary.

May I say, there is a lot we can emulate from the example of the Ephesian church. However, we come now to a very important teaching of our Lord. Jesus says, *"Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."*

Do you understand if Jesus has something against you there needs to be a change?

Through the years the Ephesian church remained faithful. There was much for the Lord to commend, but something happened in the life of this church that was very subtly and very dangerous. The heart of the Ephesian church grew cold toward the Lord Jesus. Jesus rebukes them for departing from their first love.

Pay close attention: *Jesus does not say his people in Ephesus did not love him at all. Rather, he says they no longer loved him like they did at the first.* Think about that.

Do you remember your first love for Jesus? Do you remember how you were hungry and thirsty to learn more about him? Do you remember how precious he was to you and how you longed to please him? Do you remember how passionate you were about keeping him first in your life? Do you remember how he was the joy and rejoicing of your heart?

Like the apostle Paul we could say, *"For me to live is Christ and to die is gain!"* We could also say with the apostle, *"I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."*

My friends, what happens to many believers over time? How is it that we lose our first love for the Savior?

Let me make a few suggestions as to how the fire of first love burns low.

The heart drifts from a passionate love and hunger for Christ as our affection shifts to love of temporal things. The Bible says to set your affection on things above where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Beware my friends. There is much to pursue in this world that will dampen your love for Christ.

Next, beware of love of temporal pleasures. Sadly, many who perish are said to be lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. The fleeting pleasures of this world have the power to dampen our love for Christ. Be careful. Find your greatest pleasure in serving Christ and you will not depart from your first love!

Next, beware of love for temporal crowns. Seek the honor that comes from devotion to Christ. Jesus says if any man serves me, him will my Father honor. Don't chase the corruptible crowns of this world. Rather, keep your love red hot for Jesus! Serve him first no matter what you give up in this world.

Think about this: when our heart was possessed of our first love for Jesus it was so natural and easy to let other things go. All that thrilled our heart was Jesus.

## Conclusion

Sadly, there are consequences when we leave our first love. Loss of first love gradually results in a departure from faithfulness to sound doctrine and practice. Loss of first love gradually diminishes the fire of evangelism; fervent love for Christ is the fuel that runs the engine of evangelism. And finally, loss of first love eventually results in a visible church largely comprised of unregenerate practitioners.

Have you left your first love? Has your heart grown cold toward your Savior? If so, Jesus calls you to repent. Remember: *Christ is Christianity; devotion to him*

*defines the heart and soul of Christianity; we must not allow our hearts to depart from fervent love of Christ.*

If you sense a need to re-dedicate your life to Christ and return to your first love, then do it today. The Lord himself is our prize and our great reward! Push back the things that draw your heart from him. Return to your first love.