

Subject: *Leaving Your First Love*

Scripture: *Revelation 2:1-7*

A young lady was driving home on a busy freeway when her car sputtered and stopped. She pulled over to the shoulder and a nice man stopped to help her. He looked under the hood and checked everything. Finally, he got behind the wheel and tried to start it when he noticed that her gas gauge was below empty. She was out of gas. Sadly many Christians are like this woman. They're trying to get home on an empty tank.

Jesus sends letters to each of seven churches. The first one was addressed to Ephesus. This church in Ephesus was started some 30 years earlier by the Apostle Paul. We read in Acts 20 that he stayed here for three years and used Ephesus as a mission station to reach out to the whole region. John had also ministered there, and so had Timothy. Ephesus could be described in three ways: 1) it was a sizeable city; 2) it was a strategic city (on east-west trade routes); and 3) it was a sinful city (home of the famous Temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, so it was a city full of idol worship and immorality. In this city was a Christian church. This is a message from the Lord Jesus Christ, who is in control of the leadership and who is head over the church. Jesus cares about His church. He knows what is going on in each of His churches (Christ said, "I know thy works" to each one of the seven churches). Jesus took a spiritual x-ray of all these churches, and He tells them what is right and what is wrong.

THE LORD'S COMPLIMENT

All of us like compliments, don't we? Even pastors like compliments occasionally, but sometimes they don't work out so well. One lady told her pastor, "Every sermon you preach is better than the next one." Another lady said, "You are a model preacher." He liked that until his wife reminded him that the dictionary said that a model was a small imitation of the real thing. What really matters is what Jesus thinks about us. Jesus has many good things to say about this church. In many ways it was a model church. He compliments them.

- They were serving ("thy labor")
- They were steadfast ("thy patience, endurance")
- They were separated ("thou canst not bear them which are evil")
- They were spiritual-minded ("thou hast tried them which say they are apostles")

They were able to detect false teachers from true ones.

1 John 4:1 *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try (test) the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.* Some thirty years earlier, the Apostle Paul had warned of false teachers. **Acts 20:29** *For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.*

THE LORD'S COMPLAINT

What was wrong? Were they doing something sinful? Had they compromised their faith? No. The honeymoon was over. At one time, this church was full of love for the Lord, but

now they were just going through the motions. Labor is no substitute for love and purity is no substitute for passion.

Doctrinally they were straight as a gun barrel, but they were just as empty. This had not happened overnight, but little by little. The word “left” indicates a process that took place over time. Do you love the Lord like you did when you were first saved? You have lost your first love if...

You would rather get on Facebook than read your Bible.

You would rather watch TV at home than worship in God’s house.

You give what’s left over from your paycheck instead of giving 10% off the top.

You would rather listen to the radio or a CD than pray.

You get more excited over a ball game than a baptism service.

You would rather talk about the weather than tell someone about Christ.

First love is exciting and enthusiastic. Do you still feel the thrill of knowing and loving Jesus? First love is expressed, openly displayed. First love is extravagant and sacrificial. There’s a beautiful example of first love in the life of Jacob. **Genesis 29:20** *Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.* Do you remember Mary and her alabaster box of ointment? She broke it and poured on the Lord Jesus. Judas complained and said she could have sold the ointment and given the money to the poor. Mary loved Jesus so much, but Judas had no love in his heart. He loved money and was a thief.

THE LORD’S COMMAND

- Remember

Think back to a time when you were closer to the Lord than ever before.

- Repent

Change your mind and your heart about it. Leaving our first love is offensive to God.

- Return

Do the first works. When you have the first love, you do the first works.

Jesus said, If ye love me, keep my commandments.

Doing the first works means we must get back to prayer, Bible reading, worship, and obedience. Charles Finney said: “Revival is nothing else than a new beginning of obedience to God.” When Jesus talked to Peter after His resurrection, Jesus asked him three times, “Peter, do you love me?” Then He said, “Feed my sheep.”

THE LORD’S CAUTION

Jesus says if you don’t repent and return, then He will remove your candlestick out of its place. He is describing how the church would lose its influence. Jesus warned the church that its light would go out. The church that loses its love will eventually lose its light. Years later this actually happened to the church in Ephesus. Today there is no church there. The same thing happened all over Europe and Great Britain. Churches that once were alive and growing are now closed.

THE LORD'S CHALLENGE

The message is given to the church, but it is up to individual believers to hear and heed it. At the race track many fans have headsets where they can get on a certain radio channel and listen to the driver and his crew talking. Are we tuned in to the Lord? Do we hear what He is saying?

Jesus makes a promise to overcomers. Who is an overcomer? ***1 John 5:4*** *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* Overcomers are true believers. True believers will share eternal life in heaven with Christ.

Being a Christian is not a set of rules and regulations. It is a living, growing relationship with Christ. It is a love relationship. But sometimes our love grows cold. Sometimes we go through the motions of serving Christ, but our heart is not in it.

Hudson Taylor, missionary to China, said: "The primary qualification for a missionary is not love for souls, but love for Christ." Someone described revival as "the renewal of a Christian's first love." We love Him because He first loved us. Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it.

This was a tough week for some of our members. Several had heart issues. We all know the importance of the heart as the organ that pumps blood to the rest of our body. The Bible speaks of the heart as that part of us that thinks, feels, and decides. Everything in our heart will determine what happens in our life. ***Proverbs 4:23*** *Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.* Has your heart grown cold and careless? Have you left your first love?