

First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

¹*“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.*

²*“I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. ³ I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. ⁴ But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. ⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. ⁶ Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.’*

INTRODUCTION:

Jesus writes to the church in Ephesus. Here is a church that does many things well. We see three things Jesus commends: her works, dedication, and sound doctrine

In verse 2, Jesus is pleased with their *good deeds*, for their works and toil. They were working hard, with a refusal to quit.

In verse 3, Jesus is pleased with their dedication. They possess endurance and tolerated much for Jesus' sake without growing weary. Life was not easy for them, likely facing physical violence, social ostracism, and economic repression due to their refusal to bow to the goddess Diana or imperial worship rampant in Ephesus.

Thirdly, Jesus was pleased with their sound doctrine (v2,6). They were theologically orthodox, not tolerating evil and testing those who called themselves apostles but are not.

Here is a church that was busy and active in doing many good things. Jesus accurately and fairly gives them an assessment and takes notes of these things.

DISCUSS

1. First love (v4)

By all outward appearances, the Ephesian church looked healthy. Sound doctrine, faithful living, and committed service. But there was one danger: they have abandoned their first love.

Notice that they didn't simply 'lose' their first love. They *“abandoned”* it. This likely refers to the love that should be highest in rank, a supreme love for Christ above all. Although it could also mean the initial love they once had (and perhaps both

meanings are true). They had abandoned Jesus for other things, placing them first in their lives.

The Ephesian church was at risk of becoming a “Pharisee church”. They were doing all the right things without the right motivation. It wasn’t a hand or head problem, but a heart problem. Obedience out of duty had replaced an obedience out of love for Christ.

Such a “Pharisee church” would face a sobering consequence: the removal of its lampstand. This means that Jesus would no longer recognize them as His church (cf. Rev 1:20).

Jesus desires not just our obedience, but our affection. *It matters to Him not only what we do, but why we do what we do.*

In what ways might I be serving God with my head and hands, but without my heart? How can others (perhaps my cell) help me put God first again in all I do?

2. The Remedy (v5)

All was not well, but all was not loss. Jesus our great physician diagnoses the church well. Now he offers a threefold remedy with three commands to the church.

Firstly, they are to “remember from where you have fallen” (v5a). The word “remember” denotes for them to “keep on remembering”. Do we remember when our love for Jesus was a burning passion? When we placed Him as first in rank? What was it like? What is missing now?

Secondly, they are to “repent” (5b). To have a 180-degree change of heart that leads to a change in attitude and action. Would we think of our sins differently? To think of our good deeds differently? Have we seen our labor for God as a substitute for love of God?

Thirdly, “do the works you did at first” – the highest work of abiding in and worshipping God. Placing God as the highest rank in our lives.

Remember - What practices or attitudes helped me love Jesus deeply in the past? Are those still present in my life today?

Repent - Have I been viewing ministry, service, or obedience as a substitute for intimacy with God? What change of mind or heart is needed?

First works - How can I make space for worship or prayer in a way that is less routine and more relational?

Pray For:

1. First Love

Ask God to show where our hearts have grown cold, and renew our love for Him above all.

2. Remedy

Thank God that He calls us back when we stray. Pray for the humility to remember, the courage to repent, and the desire to return to our first love through worship and putting Christ first again.