

# Remember Your First Love

## *Revelation 2:1-7*

Pastor Michael Lynn / West Hampden Baptist Church

July 23, 2023 a.m.

Introduction: "A boy & girl walk down the street, She trips. He murmurs, 'Careful sweet.' They wed and tread the selfsame street. She trips. He growls, 'Pick up your feet.'" Consider the love shown between newlyweds & contrast it with their actions after some years of marriage. What about our relationship to Christ? As we prepare for communion this morning, can you recall your initial experience of salvation?

The Book of Revelation was written as a whole to the seven churches of Asia, with an individual message for each church. Each of the seven messages has a similar order: A command, commendation, condemnation, correction, & challenge. The message is directed to the "*angel*" or messenger of the church, probably referring to its pastor. He was to share the message with the entire church.

Ephesus ("Desirable") was the most prominent city in Asia. It was the chief Aegean port of Asia Minor in Paul's day, the gateway to the Orient from Greece & Rome. It was made the practical capital of the province of Asia by Rome. One of the seven wonders of the ancient world was there, the temple of Artemis (Diana). It was a strategic center not only for commerce, travel, & pagan worship, but an ideal location for a Bible-believing church to spread the Gospel throughout the known world.

### I. The recognition for their working (:1-3)

#### A. The command (:1)

1. "*He that holdeth...*" > His protection [literally, "holds fast" – authoritatively, present tense].
  - a. He holds all the angels of the churches (cf. 1:16 & John 10:28-29, all believers).
  - b. He has Sovereign control: Possession of Him; Protection by Him; Purpose for Him.
2. "*He that walketh...*" >
  - a. His presence - He is in their midst: "His presence unites them as one; empowers, encourages, comforts; gives guidance & instruction; & shows His intimate knowledge of the exact condition of each church." (Neal) – Pastors, as under shepherds, are charged to (1) feed the sheep; (2) follow the shepherd; & (3) further the Gospel.
  - b. Their position - He is the authority of the church. Any authority or power of the church comes from Him. (Pastors, as well as all believers, must keep their eyes on Him.

#### B. The commendation (:2-3 & :6)

1. Their **diligence** (:2-3) > A working church [dynamic, dedicated, determined].
  - a. He knows their "*works*" - fruit of one's labor ["It is a comforting thought that no Christian does anything for his Lord that He does not know. Good works will not pass unnoticed & unrewarded (see Mk. 9:41)... No suffering or hardship is endured of which He is not sympathetically aware. It is also a sobering thought that any neglect or indifference is open to His gaze (Heb. 4:13). No sin or backsliding, however small or secret, can be hidden from Him" (Neal).]
  - b. He knows their "*labour*" (2 times) - the effort which goes in one's work, toil ["Nothing is accomplished for Christ without effort - tiresome, exhausting effort... Christianity has not been tried & found wanting. It has been found hard & not tried." (Neal).]
  - c. He knows their "*patience*" (2 times) - steadfastness, perseverance (cf. "*hast borne*")
  - d. He knows their determination - "*hast not fainted*" - cf. Gal. 6:9 & I Cor. 15:58 [When weary, we need to look to Him & remember that He is looking at us.]
2. Their **doctrine** (:2 & :6) > A well-taught church [disciplined – exercised church discipline].
  - a. They were discerning (:2) - able to distinguish truth from error [define "*Nicolaitans*".]
  - b. They were dedicated (:6) - they would not compromise with evil (worldliness today?).

## II. The **rebuke** for their warning (:4, “Nevertheless...” – But...)

### The **condemnation**:

- A. The **problem** - their lack of devotion [“*somewhat*” is in italics – “I have against thee...”]
1. “Thy first love thou hast left” (cf. Ephesians 1:15-16) - “*left*” > “Implies an intentional, not accidental, act” (Ryrie). – Excitement of the new believer is gone.
  2. Not lacking in doctrine (a matter of the *head*) nor diligence (a matter of the *hand* or will), but in love (a matter of the *heart*). “But the Ephesians' passion & fervor for Christ had become cold, mechanical orthodoxy. Their doctrinal & moral purity, their undiminished zeal for the truth, & their disciplined service were no substitute for the love for Christ they had forsaken.”
- B. The **parallel** - the danger of leaving (losing) our first love
1. When love has grown cold, spiritual apathy usually follows - “One sin, if unchecked, will lead to others. If we fail to do what we ought to do, we will soon do what we ought not to do” (Neal). “One may be as straight as gun barrel theologically & (but) as empty as a gun barrel spiritually” (Vance Havner).
  2. “...the cooling of spiritual love, then the love of God replaced by a love for the things of the world, with resulting compromise & spiritual corruption.” (Walvoord)

## III. The **restoration** for their well-being (:5 & :7)

### A. The **correction** (:5)

1. **Remember** - go back to the place of departure - recall the wonder & joy of salvation [the first step is to realize how far we have fallen; illustrate with the prodigal son]
2. **Repent** - a change of mind & direction; a decision to put away sin
3. **Repeat** - “*do the first works*” - serving God out of devotion rather than out of duty - the answer is diligence & doctrine with devotion! [For some the answer is to throw out doctrine.]
4. If not, the result - candlestick removed [Final warning > “*or else...*”]

### B. The **challenge** (:7)

1. The **invitation** - “*He that hath an ear, let him hear...*” [Individual & personal]
  - a. “It is a divine principle that only those who desire to do God's will can know God's will” [John 7:17] (Morris).
  - b. Christ & the Holy Spirit are One, so that which One says, the other says.
2. The **promise** - the overcomer:
  - a. Who? genuine Christians; true followers of the Lord (I John 5:5).
  - b. What? have the right to eat of the tree of life.
    - (1) First mentioned in Genesis 3:22, in the Garden of Eden.
    - (2) Later found in Revelation 22:2, fruit for the abundant health & life of the nation.
    - (3) Speaks of abundant life in Christ & fellowship with Him (“*Paradise*” cf. Lk. 23:43).

**Conclusion:** Within 100 years after Christ, the church stopped expanding (in its missionary work) & began organizing. Love of Christ was lost in a love for their organization. As a city, Ephesus declined in importance. “Ephesus today is a deserted ruin. Tourists roam its excavated streets, but no one lives there. For centuries it has lain undisturbed & useless... The light is gone; the candlestick is removed; the words of warning of Revelation 2:5 have been fulfilled.” (Neal)

How about our church in comparison? It is said that growing churches are more loving churches. Love for Christ will be demonstrated in love for others (beginning within the marriage bonds). Are we doctrinally sound? Are we diligently working? Are we serving Christ out of devotion rather than duty? If not, may God help us to remember, repent & repeat the first works. Remember your first love!