



First Love

Revelation 2:1-7
Week of March 27, 2022

Before Connect Group

- Revelation 2:1-17
 - Watch the sermon by going to <http://switzerlandcommunitychurch.org>
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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. "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. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. 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. Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 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.

Revelation 2:1-7, ESV

Sermon Notes

Christ frees us from needing to earn our salvation through the law, frees us to be fully follow Him, and frees us to love one another deeply.

etter to the Church at Ephesus The book of Revelation in Ch 2 and 3, John writes letters to the 7 churches in Asia Minor. In each letter, there is typically some commendation, a condemnation, and a correction. Today, we want to look at the letter to the church in Ephesus which is the first letter to one of the 7 churches. But before we get to the letter, we need to do a little background from Revelation 1.

Background

- *Revelation 1:1 The revelation of Jesus Christ*
- *Revelation 1:4-5 Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood*
- In these verses, we have the Trinity represented. From Him who is and who was and who is to come refers to God the Father, and the 7 spirits before the throne refer to the Holy Spirit and the spirits probably refers to the completeness of the Spirit rather than there being 7 of them, and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness.
- *Revelation 1:11 John is told to write a letter to the 7 churches - "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."*
- He receives a vision of Jesus Christ in Rev 1:12-17
- *Revelation 1:12-17 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.*
- All of these phrases are a depiction of God the Father from the Old Testament. These phrases equate Jesus with the same depiction of God the Father.
- *Revelation 1:17-20 But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this. As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.*
- I am the first and the last
- I died and I am alive forevermore
- These phrases are used as part of the letters to the churches in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3.

Commendation (right behavior and right beliefs)

- *Revelation 2:2-3 "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. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing*

up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary.

- I know your works and your toil
- The Lord knows and sees our past works and our current works
 - He knows our strengths
 - He knows our struggles
 - He knows our history
 - He knows our leaders, past, present, and future
 - He knows what we have accomplished in His name
 - I know your patient endurance
 - He knows if we are patient
 - He knows the circumstances which we must endure
- Patient endurance indicates a faith and trust in the Lord's leading and guidance. Patient endurance demonstrates we trust in God's sovereignty.
- Bearing up for his name's sake (v. 3) The church in Ephesus was commended for enduring patiently for the sake of the Lord. They were bearing up for the right reasons.
- He knows whether we have grown weary
- You do not bear with those who are evil
- This indicates agreement with God's assessment of evil
- God hates evil
- It indicates that the church had proper judgment toward evil
- You expose false Apostles
- Desire to see false teachers exposed
- Not allow people to fall prey to false teachers
- A reverence for the Word of God and for adherence to the truth
- To call someone a "False Teacher" you better be sure you know the truth. Remember, Jesus was called a false teacher by the Sanhedrin and they were utterly mistaken!!
- This is a pretty good picture on the commendation side. You and I would like to have these said of us. We would like to be known for our work and endurance. To be known for opposing evil and exposing false teachers. Even with all of these positive accolades, God had one thing against the church in Ephesus.

Condemnation

- *Revelation 2:4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.*
- But I have this against you. You have abandoned (left) your first love. KJV left thy first love, NASB left your first love, NIV forsaken the love you had at first, ESV Abandoned the love you had at first.
- This is where we want to concentrate today
- What does it mean to abandon our first love? You love your behavior and your belief more than me. You have become distracted (making secondary the primary) First is primary not what is first in sequence.
- Let's relate today's message to the messages from the last few weeks. Jack talked about walking through the doors that Jesus opens, the first of which is the door of salvation. Danny addressed gospel drift and how we tend to add things to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel transforms us to become more like Christ.
- When we abandon our first love, it means that we are the ones who moved away. God did not get distant, he didn't get hard of hearing or indifferent to our circumstances, we caused the distance because we abandoned Him.
- Sometimes we abandon our first love by living in our own strength. We start living life

without consulting God. We no longer read scripture regularly. We stop praying or pray very infrequently. We make our own plans, we may even ask God to bless them, but we never ask God what His plans for us are. This is abandoning our first love. And what does God say to us in John 15 - Apart from me you can do nothing.

- Sometimes we abandon our first love by trying to follow a list of rules. We attempt to live a strictly moral life focusing on do's and don'ts which many times makes us judgmental to the people around us. We fall into the trap of not seeing the log in our own eye but want to remove the speck that is in our brother's eye. This is a reminder of the Jews and how they attempted to follow the letter of the law without truly seeking God.
- Sometimes we abandon our first love by pursuing knowledge. We read God's word to discover hidden meanings or interesting facts. We might even be able to quote large portions of scripture and know the lists of genealogy by heart. However, we can do this without pursuing a relationship with God. We may know facts about the Bible, but we only let it impact our knowledge and not allow it to transform our character or help us to understand God. 1 Corinthians 8:1 knowledge puffs up
- We can live only for our own selfish desires.
- 1 Corinthians 13:2 If we don't have love, we are nothing.
- We left the one who provided our forgiveness who provided our redemption. The one who took God's wrath upon himself for the punishment of my sins. The one who adopted us as sons. The one who has provided our inheritance. The one who has given us eternal life.
- What do we do if we find we have abandoned our first love?
- *Revelation 2:5 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.*
 - Remember from where you have fallen
 - Remember how excited you were to follow God at first. Everything was new and believing the Lord seemed top of mind.
 - Remember how you loved discovering new things in the Bible at first. Constantly reading the Word of God to find out what he said and what to believe.
 - Remember how quick you were to apply God's Word to your life?
 - Remember how quick you would abandon your own thinking to align with what you thought the Word of God meant?

Repent

- Align our thinking with God's - do not search the scriptures to find evidence for the way you believe, but search the scriptures to discover what God says and respond accordingly
- His ways are higher than our ways, His thoughts higher than our thoughts
- Turn from our way of thinking to God's way of thinking
- Change your mind about how you view things
- Sorrow over an offense
- Do the works you did at first
- Read the Bible with expectation that He will speak
- Let the Word overflow into Worship - as you see what the Word says about God or Jesus or Holy Spirit, let it well up inside of us to Worship
- Respond to the Word with obedience - If there is a sin to avoid or a command to obey, oh that we would put it into practice immediately
- Actively listen to God - Don't just read scripture, ask questions of it. What does the

passage say about God? Who is the author? Who is the audience? What circumstances were in place? What was the culture and context of the passage?

- Jesus is saying "Live out of affection for me"
- So how should we respond to the message today? Do what the Spirit of God leads you to do. If you have been convicted by any words from this passage don't become discouraged, take God at His Word and in love move towards Him. He does not want to leave us where we are, but desires that we become more like Christ.

Connect Group Discussion Questions

- As John details the church in Ephesus returning to their first love, what do the details of this sections imply what is meant by “first love?” What are the people of Ephesus expected to return to?
- What are the things the people of the church in Ephesus are commended for? What are the things the people in the church of Ephesus are condemned for?
- Why do we tend to abandon our first love? What are the distractions and other things that derail us from fully experiencing the Gospel in our lives?
- What are the things we do to deepen our affection for God? What disciplines does the Christian engage in as a part of their daily walk with Christ?
- How should we confront theological inaccuracy while still showing love for the people around us? How should we confront sin in one another’s life?

Challenge For The Week

The church in Ephesus had been fantastic at ensuring the theological soundness of the church and protecting from invading beliefs counter to the Gospel. Yet, they had forgotten to love others in the process.

- Take some time to consider where you may have grown cold to the needs of love the people around us have. Ask God to forgive where you have grown cold and invite the Spirit to work through you in the process.
- Identify some people you interact with on a daily basis that you can be praying for this week who need the Gospel. Write down their name and put it in a place where you can remember to pray for them.

