**The Church That Left Its First Love**

*Revelation 2:1-7*

**Introduction**

1. Revelation 2 and 3 contains seven letters from the Lord to seven churches of Asia. This is recorded by John on the isle of Patmos.
2. While the seven letters are addressed to seven specific individual congregations, the culmination of the letters serve as reproof, rebuke, and exhortation for all churches.
3. **Revelation 2:1-7** comprises the first letter to the church of Ephesus.
   1. This church had several things which the Lord commended.
   2. **However, there was one very important thing which had waned in their service.**
   3. We can learn from this letter, and from the Ephesian church’s mistake.
4. The Scene
5. What John Saw **(1:12-17)**
   1. **(v. 10)** – John was in a trance induced by the Spirit – for the purpose of revelation.
   2. **(v. 10b-11)** – John heard a voice giving him instruction. The voice was that of Jesus.
   3. **(v. 12-16)** – After he heard the voice, John turned to see from whom it came:
      1. This begins the book’s use of symbols in the description of Jesus – ***“One like the Son of Man.”***
      2. **The One John saw, Who was Jesus, had an appearance that spoke of many things:**
         1. Clothed as a High Priest, and as One of Royalty.
         2. White hair of purity, and wisdom.
         3. Penetrating eyes that see ALL. (Omnipresent, Omniscient)
         4. Steady and conquering foundation – feet of fine brass.
         5. A voice which boomed with authority.
         6. From His mouth came forth the sharp and penetrating judgment of God’s word.
         7. His appearance was overall glorious – like the shining sun.
6. What John Heard **(1:17-20)**
   1. **(v. 17)** – Such a sight caused John to fall to his knees in utter awe and fear.
   2. **(v. 17b-20)** – Jesus’ words to end the chapter give both comfort, and warning to heed the things spoken by Him.
      1. **(v. 17b-18)** – Jesus has power over death, and the grave – having been raised to die no more.
         1. Do not be afraid.
         2. Jesus offers this same victory to you.
      2. **(v. 19)** – It was IMPERITIVE that John recorded the events in this Revelation.
         1. The overall message is the Victory of Jesus.
         2. **That which follows is the victory of THOSE IN JESUS, and the eternal punishment of THOSE WITHOUT JESUS.**
      3. **(v. 20)** – Jesus reveals the mystery of the stars and lampstands.
         1. Stars – angels/messengers – to the lampstand 🡪
         2. Lampstands – churches.
         3. **(2:1)** – Jesus is among the church, and knows our every word and deed.
            1. **We cannot hide from Him.**
            2. **Also, He is able to aid us, and instruct us in anything we need.**
7. ***Ultimately, the things about to be revealed by Jesus to these churches is of great importance. To heed them is to appeal to the One with power over death for life, and to ignore them is to ensure your own demise. 🡪***
8. What Was Right **(2:2-3, 6) (cf. Ephesians)**
9. They Worked **(vv. 2a, 3b)**
   1. **The church is not to be a stationary and stagnant institution, but active in the will of God.**
   2. Walk worthy of the calling – **Ephesians 4:1**
      1. **Calling** – an invitation – namely to salvation, but to all that is included in such a call.
      2. **Ultimately, it was a call to act and live like a Christian.**
   3. Some things included in this walk:
      1. **Ephesians 4:2** – They were **lowly** *(humble)*, **gentle** *(mild and kind)*, **longsuffering** *(not quick to vengeance when wronged by others)*, **bearing in love** *(patience toward others – seeking their well-being)* toward and with one another.
         1. **(v. 3)** – They were constantly seeking to keep unity and peace with the congregation.
         2. ***“of the Spirit”*** – This was done by their adherence to the commands of God.
      2. **Ephesians 4:11-13, 15-16** – They were using the gifts God had given to grow in the faith.
         1. ***“Speaking the truth in love”*** – they grew in Christ in no other way than promoting truth in a loving manner.
         2. **(v. 16)** – Every part (member) was doing their share – contributing to the Lord’s work.
   4. **This congregation was active!**
10. They Did Not Compromise With Evil **(vv. 2b, 6)**
    1. Immorality
       1. **Ephesians 4:17-24** – They did not walk as they used to walk as Pagans.
          1. **(v. 19)** – they weren’t given over to worldliness.
          2. **(v. 20-24)** – they put off that old man, and were learned of Christ, living in RIGHTEOUSNESS and HOLINESS.
       2. ***“Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this:…to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27)*** – This is how they were conducting themselves.
    2. False Doctrine
       1. **Revelation 2:2b** – Tested false apostles, and found them to be LIARS.
          1. ***“Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God” (1 John 4:1).***
          2. ***“Test all things; hold fast what is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21).***
          3. They did not simply accept all as truth, but gave their due diligence in testing it.
       2. **Revelation 2:6** – Little is known about the Nicolaitans, but the Lord HATED their doctrine, so the Ephesians did as well.
       3. **Ephesians 4:14** – They did not allow themselves to be tricked by men, and swayed by other doctrines.
11. They Were Patient and Persevered **(vv. 2a, 3)**
    1. **They did not allow themselves to grow weary while working for God, but pushed toward the goal.**
    2. **Ephesians 1:18** – They looked to the hope as Paul had prayed, and persevered toward it, understanding their value to the Lord.
    3. ***“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart” (Galatians 6:9).***
12. **The Ephesian congregation received much commendation from the Lord. They were a church to be imitated, but fell short in one point 🡪**
13. What Was Wrong
14. They Had Left Their First Love **(2:4)**
    1. **Their ardor/zeal/passion for their Savior, Jesus Christ, had waned throughout the years***. (Ephesians written AD 62-63, and Revelation written AD 95 – time had passed.)*
    2. **John 4:24** – God desires an equal balance in our worship to Him.
       1. **Truth** – we must conduct our worship in the way prescribed by God. (All according to His word – the truth.)
       2. **Spirit** – We must not only understand the nature of our service – spiritual because God is spirit – **but the mindset must follow – *we must be sincere in our worship, and our heart must be fully invested.***
    3. ***“Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things” (Acts 17:25*** – Paul on Mars’ hill).
       1. Our conduct before God, and service to Him includes physical actions. **(Bodies** – living sacrifice – **Romans 12:1** – Instruments of righteousness – **Romans 6:12-13**)
       2. These must comply with God’s specified instruction.
       3. **However, it is not something which God PHYSICALLY needs, for God is SPIRIT.**
       4. It is only pleasing to Him on the SPIRITUAL level – **when OUR SPIRITS (hearts) are FULLY INVESTED.**
    4. **Psalm 78:34-37** – A Psalm of Asaph recalling the mighty works of God, and Israel’s failure to reciprocate with loving faithfulness.
       1. He gave them food in the wilderness, but they were disobedient, and perished in the wilderness.
       2. **(vv. 36-37)** – Afterwards, despite their words, their heart was insincere, and far from being invested in God.
       3. **NOTE: v. 37b** – This lack of zeal for God, and sincere love, leads to direct disobedience of His word.
    5. ***If our love for God wanes, it is only a matter of time until our actions completely follow, and we become involved with error in doctrine, and practice. 🡪***
    6. ***“Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men’” (Matthew 15:7-9 – Jesus to the Pharisees).***
15. Solution: Remember, Repent, and Do **(2:5)**
    1. **In order to gain back such zeal and love for the Lord, returning to His good favor, we must call to remembrance the condition we were redeemed from, and then allow such remembrance to produce such thanksgiving and zeal that our vigorous love for Christ returns.**
    2. This is what Paul did, and continuously showed in his epistles: (This is how he maintained his fervor for Christ, his first love.)
       1. **1 Timothy 1:12-17** – He did not wallow in his failures of the past, but he did allow the remembrance of them to wax his love for what Christ did for him, than allow himself to leave his first love.
       2. **Paul did not allow himself to grow complacent in his relationship with Christ, but kept his first love.**

**Conclusion**

1. It is good that we live moral lives, are active in the church, and contend for the faith. We must do all that the truth requires us to do.
2. **However, if our hearts are not involved in our actions, and we are insincere, we will not be pleasing to God.**
3. **Have you left your first love?** Remember how you were when first converted, and grow your sincere love for Christ.