

## New Beginnings

Revelation 2:1-7; Ephesians 5:18

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This year will be different. How? That's what I want to talk about this morning. There are two verses I want begin with as a way of reminder: The first is 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." The second is Philippians 1:6.

If you are a Christian, you are a new creature in Christ and a work in progress. So whatever 2013 was like, good, bad, indifferent, it can change. It can get better. Our lives are constantly new beginnings. How do we live this new beginning today and in 2014? How do you cooperate with the work that Christ is doing in you everyday not just one day of the year? Let's survey our lives this morning. As you do that, ask yourself, "What do I see?" "Do I see in my life an increase in holiness and a decrease in sin?" To answer those questions, I want us first to look at a church that was doing it right but later learned that they were neglecting the one thing they should have guarded.

The church is found in Revelation 2:1-7 (the church at Ephesus). You'll notice quickly in Revelation 2:2-3 what they were doing right as a church. This is everything a church must do: laboring, persevering, not compromising (Acts 20:28-31), testing, confirming, and enduring in Christ's name and not growing weary in His work. But Jesus said in Revelation 2:4 there was something they neglected. "First love" is honeymoon love. It's your "chief" or "primary" love. Here Jesus said they had "left" or "deserted" it. The ESV says they "abandoned it." This was serious!!! So serious that if they didn't correct it, He would remove their lamp stand (Revelation 2:5). The lamp stand according to Revelation 1:20 was the church. To remove the lamp stand meant to remove the church. So you can see why this desertion of their first love was so serious. So what does He tell them to do. Revelation 2:5 gives us the answer.

There are 3 things they were to do. The first was to...Remember where they had fallen. That meant they needed to go back to the place where they departed. Second...Repent. Once they understood where they departed they needed to repent. And third...Repeat or do what they did at first. In other words go back to the basics. Go back to where your love started. What did they do at first? The basics. Their relationship with Jesus began with an excitement for prayer, bible study, spiritual gifts, and sharing Christ. Wasn't this true for you? Revelation 2:6-7 says they did hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans but they needed to hear what the Spirit was saying to them.

Deuteronomy 6:5 reminds us of our chief priority. Jesus said in Matthew 22:38 that this is "the great and foremost commandment." Jesus challenged His disciples to make love for Him the highest priority of their lives in Matthew 10:37-38. Even on one occasion He asked Peter three times , "Do you love Me?" (John 21:15-17).

Ministering your spiritual gift illustrates the second most fundamental priority in your life

because it focuses your heart on the source or key to your spiritual life. We are told in Galatians 5:16 to walk by the Spirit. We are told in Ephesians 5:17-18 to be filled with the Spirit. Who is the key or source in those two verses? The Holy Spirit. What does it mean to walk by the Spirit and be filled with the Spirit as it is stated in those two verses? The best way to understand those two commands is to understand the parallel in Colossians 3:16. Both Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:18 issue in the same results though they are worded differently. Ephesians 5:18 says to be filled with the Spirit but Colossians 3:16 says to let the word of Christ richly dwell in you. What does that mean? Obey the Word. To be filled with the Spirit is to be controlled by the Word of God.

Let me sum this up on your outline.

#### I. We Must Not Forsake Our First Love (who is Jesus)

- A. By Busyness in Religious Matters - Rev.3:17
- B. By Making False Claims

#### II. We Must Be Controlled By God's Word

- A. By Dying to Self - 2 Corinthians 5:14-15
- B. By Loving Jesus More - John 14:23

#### CONCLUSION

Staying in love with Jesus by being controlled by His Word should be our goal for 2014 and beyond!

So what does 2014 look like?