

The Church that Forgot to Love
Revelation 2:1-7

INTRO:

Probably the most misunderstood word in the world today is the word *“love.”* At the same time, one of the most powerful principles in life is also *“love.”* Because Satan has not been able to conquer love, he has set out to bury it in a graveyard of confusion. Love today is a synonym for lust, selfishness, and illicit sex. If it weren't for the fact that I know that God is Sovereign and always victorious, I would think that Satan had won the battle here.

How do we clear the smoke screen? How can we know what love really is and how we can have the love that we should have in our lives? We can begin by examining the importance of real love in passages like the one before us today, **Revelation 2**. This is a letter to the church at Ephesus, dictated by the Lord Jesus, and taken down by the Apostle John.

I. THE LORD WHO LOVES (v. 1)

II. THE CHURCH THAT DIDN'T LOVE (v. 2-4)

III. THE CORRECTION TO BRING BACK LOVE (v. 5-7)

I. THE LORD WHO LOVES (v. 1)

A. In **Revelation 1**, the Apostle John was in the Spirit on the Lord's day and he heard the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ instructing him to write down what he was about to see and hear in a book and to send it to the churches. When he turned he saw the glorified Christ who stood in the midst of the seven candlesticks which are the seven churches and who held the seven messengers of the churches in His hand.

B. In our text, this same risen and exalted Lord Jesus is dictating letters to the church of Ephesus. The Lord reminded the Ephesians that He is the One who ***“holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:”*** Our Lord Jesus told us in no uncertain terms that He is in the midst of His churches. He is supremely interested in them and He cares what happens to them. Sometimes we are tempted to think that this church is our church, but that is not so. It is His church. Christ loves His churches and He who is concerned about our love, never fails to love those who are His.

II. THE CHURCH THAT FORGOT TO LOVE (v. 2-4)

A. Before the Lord talked about their failure, the Lord describes their success. **(Rev 2:2-3)** ***“I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.”***

1. In each letter this first statement is repeated, ***“I know your works.”*** He knows what we do, what we think, and what we say. Every service we do for God He knows. He knows how we work for Him when no one else can see. And the Father who sees in secret rewards us openly.

2. The Lord commends this Ephesian church for three things. First, He knows its efforts in serving Him, ***“your labor.”*** He also knew their patience. They endured trials and suffering knowing God had a plan in these things. Twice Jesus mentioned this quality. In **verse 2** we read, ***“your patience.”*** A second time in **verse 3** He said; ***“you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary.”***

The Ephesians kept on even when ministry hurt. Finally, the Lord Jesus commended the Ephesians for their intolerance of error. **(v.2)**

“And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;”

3. If the Lord Jesus were to send a report card on Calvary Baptist Church to us here, what would it say?

C. On the surface, this Ephesian church seemed to be the epitome of what a church should be. They had an impeccable Christian lifestyle. They looked like they should, they acted like they should, they even sounded like a good church should sound. They got an “A” for practice, but they got an “F” for relationship **(v.4)**.

“Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.”

1. What is first love? We learn what first love is in **Deuteronomy 6:4-5**.

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”

When the Lord Jesus was asked what was the most important commandment in the Law He replied, with this commandment. **(Matthew 22:37-38)**

‘Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment.’”

2. If this is the first and greatest commandment, then not doing this is the greatest sin. The Ephesians had not made loving God a priority. They had let their love for God slip and be swallowed up in the demands of the world around them. Although none of us has ever loved God perfectly, we can grow in loving Him. Several years ago (perhaps 40 years ago) I remember Pastor Jameson introducing a missionary to our youth group by telling them they needed to pay close attention to this man because he had learned to love the Lord. Are we learning to love the Lord Jesus or are we so busy serving that we have no time to love?

III. THE CORRECTION TO BRING BACK LOVE (v. 5-7)

A. How do we get back to where we have to be with the Lord Jesus? (v.5)

“Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.”

How do we get it back? First we need to remember from whence we have fallen.

Remember when you couldn't wait to get up in the morning so you could spend time with Jesus. Remember the sweet times of fellowship in prayer with Him. Remember the joy of speaking for Him and standing for Him and His cause. Remember the precious times of seeking His face. Remember and then repent.

B. Repent, recognize that letting something else slip into your live which takes the Lord's place is sin. The Bible uses shocking language to describe this very thing. Listen to **James 4:4**;

“Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

That's strong language. Repentance is a change of mind that produces a change of life.

C. Redo. We must do again the first works. Feelings do not come back, just because we want them to return. They return because we are doing what we should do. Love as God defines it is first a vocational choice. *“Yes, Lord, I will try to love you with all my heart, all my soul, and all my strength.”* It is a decision that begins in the mind and moves to the heart. Set time that is just His time. Spend time with Him and soon the sweetness will return. Second, we need to deal with those things which have stolen that love away from us. We need to make sure they are in the right place in our lives.