

Morning Sermon May 16, 2021

“A Great Church Starting to Slip ...” – Revelation 2:1-7

I. Jesus’ introduction of Himself –

2 “To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, ‘These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: Revelation 2:1 (NKJV)

1. Note, Jesus introduces Himself in terminology taken from the vision he gave to John in chapter 1.
- A. We know from chapter 1 that the seven stars which He holds in His right hand are the “angels” of the seven churches; and that the lampstands are the seven churches –

20 The mystery of the seven stars which 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 which you saw are the seven churches. Revelation 1:20 (NKJV)

- B. His holding these “angels” in His right hand symbolizes power both to uphold in all circumstances or destroy!
- C. His walking among the lampstands, means He observes them like a priest maintain candles, if needed He replaces them!

2. Jesus is the ONE able to shut down or prosper this church –
 - A. Shut down, “remove your lampstand”

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. Revelation 2:5 (NKJV)

Or

- B. Prosper – “I will give to eat...”

7 “... I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” Revelation 2:7

II. Jesus evaluates this church, finding both “good” and “bad” –

1. The good –

2 “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; **3** and you have

persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary. Revelation 2:2-3

They had:

- A. Works, good deeds ... Revelation 2:2 A
- B. Labor – meaning effort, they worked despite difficulty ... Revelation 2:2 B
- C. Patience, or perseverance – they continued to labor despite hardship and even opposition - Revelation 2:2 C
- D. Doctrinal integrity, they found the false teachers and threw them out - - Revelation 2:2 D
- E. All this is repeated by Christ in emphasized in their favor - Revelation 2:3

2. The bad –

4 Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. Revelation 2:4 (NKJV)

- A. This is speaking about that Love for God and Jesus which is commanded in Scripture –

4 “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! **5** You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. Deuteronomy 6:4–5 (NKJV)

It is an “all” heart, soul, and strength love ---

- B. This passage in Revelation 2, is not saying that they no longer love Christ at all, because they still did love Jesus!
- C. However, this passage is saying they have slipped in their first Higher LEVEL of LOVE for Christ - you have left your first love.
- D. This slipping, this leaving your first love, is a normal, natural thing in a sin-filled world – “You don’t send me flowers, ANYMORE!” Neil Diamond, Barbra Streisand –

We who are too often influenced by the world, think it excusable when an older, wiser more experienced Christian does not have the same LOVE, Zeal, Passion for Christ he or she had when younger!

But this is **WRONG!**

E. Love in an ungodly world is not like love in the church:

- People in the world “fall into love” accidentally – God’s people love intentionally by keeping God’s commands – **John 14:15**
- People in the world count love a “crazy little thing” and “irrational” they do not understand it, while the church has definitions and descriptions of love provided for them in Scripture – **1 Corinthians 13; 1 John 4:7-8**. We are enabled by God’s Spirit to understand and apply these teachings about LOVE to life, and we should! A lack of love is a serious problem – **1 Corinthians 13:1-3**
- People in the world “love” because they are created in God’s image, but sin has marred and corrupted this love to the point it is often confused with and replaced by lust, yet in the Church Love is a fruit of God’s Spirit – **Galatians 5:22** – meaning supernatural! Our LOVE should have God-given qualities about it, surpassing the world’s love – **Matthew 5:44-48**.
- Love which is a fruit of the Spirit, though a supernatural thing, because a “fruit” and not a weed, requires cultivation -
²² **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, ... Galatians 5:22-23**

III. How do we cultivate (or re-cultivate) love in our hearts for God, especially after we have left our first love?

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. **Revelation 2:5 (NKJV)**

1. ⁵ Remember – Remember how you have loved Christ in the past, ask the Holy Spirit to bring back memories –

“Remember from where you have fallen;”

2. **Repent** – Note, our Lord uses the word “repent” twice in this verse, at its beginning and at its end. This is:

A. To emphasize its importance, it is necessary even for this sin of omission!

B. To emphasize its urgency, He was going to remove their lampstand - **quickly**

3. **Do the first works** – At least what you have done in the past!

4. **Fear the removal of your lampstand -**

“or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place” ... **Revelation 2:5 (NKJV)**

At the very least this would mean ending this church’s effective witness in the world, meaning it would no longer be fulfilling its true purpose, as Jesus calls us to be lights in this dark world –

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. **Matthew 5:14–16 (NKJV)**

Reduction of love (for god, Christ, or each other) is like dimming the lights... **John 13:34-35**

IV. Note, while Christ gives criticism, He also gives credit –

⁶ But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. **Revelation 2:6**

Loving Christ means hating what is evil –

⁹ Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. **Romans 12:9 (NKJV)**

V. He offers a reward too, for overcoming, and key to this is having an ear to hear –

⁷ “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” **Revelation 2:7 (NKJV)**

A. The importance of having an ear to hear!

B. The glory and joy of overcoming, a true reward, the tree of life – **SALVATION!**