

REVELATION – SERMON 7

WARM HANDS, COLD HEART

Revelation 2:4-5

INTRODUCTION

- At this time of year we often hear the saying, “Cold hands, warm heart.”
- But the reverse was true of the church at Ephesus.
- Their hands were warm with busyness and labour.
- But their hearts – the seat of their affections – had become cold toward the Lord.
- They were busy, but backslidden.
- Jesus knew the *outward* state of the church at Ephesus, just as any human observer could see what an industrious and doctrinally pure church this was.
- But *“the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.”* (1 Samuel 16:7)
- Christ’s eyes are as a flame of fire (1:14) that penetrate the external and go deep into the recesses of our hearts.
- To all appearances, this church had it all together, no one would have thought they were in a “fallen” state, yet this is what the Lord says (v.5)

- Christ revealed that they had a serious illness, a *terminal* illness.
- A church can have all the right doctrines and be active in God's work, but that is no guarantee that they love the Lord.
- At the beginning of each of these messages to the churches, Christ is described in a particular way that has a particular significance to each particular church.
- He "holdeth the seven stars in his right hand" which indicates the supreme power that Christ has over His ministers (the angels), as well as the churches that He walks among.
- This was to remind them of the Lordship of Christ over His church; He creates, builds and maintains His church; they are entirely dependent upon Him for their perpetuity.
- And as He walks among the candlesticks, He has the role of trimming the lamps, but also of extinguishing them when necessary (2:5).
- They were to understand that the life of a church is not reliant upon their work, labour, and orthodoxy, but upon their relationship to the Head, Jesus Christ.
- Christ commended them for their hatred (v.6), but criticised them for the love they had left (v.4)
- Though Christ gave this church a strong rebuke and warning, it is instructive that both before and after it, He praises them.

- If we wish others to hear our rebukes, they ought to be surrounded by words of encouragement and kindness. (Colossians 4:6)

In Christ's rebuke to the Ephesian church, He firstly reveals where they had gone wrong, before showing them the way to recovery.

I. THEIR PITIABLE CONDITION (4)

A. The Lord's complaint

1. Note that "somewhat" is not in the original Greek
2. Though Christ had much to say *for* them, yet He had much to say *against* them also
3. The pronouns "thee" and "thou" are singular – He speaks to the church as a whole, but also personally to each individual member of the church

B. First love

1. This is has been called "espousal love", and "early love"
2. The Lord's relationship with His chosen people is pictured in the love between a husband and wife (Jeremiah 2:2-5; Hosea 2:14-23; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25)

C. Love to Christ is to be pre-eminent

1. This is the greatest commandment (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37-38)

2. This love is to come before every other love, even family love (Matthew 10:37-38; Luke 14:26)
3. Love is the “root and ground” of the Christian life (Ephesians 3:17; cf. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15)
4. Without charity (love), the very best we can do amounts to nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)
5. Those who do not love the Lord Jesus Christ are accursed (1 Corinthians 16:22)

D. This first love can be left

1. The word “left” is means “to send away” as of a husband divorcing his wife
2. “Left” (not “lost”) indicates retrievability
3. “Left” (not “lost”) indicates volition, a decision of the will
4. Love of Christ is left when love of other things (even good and lawful things) takes its place

“Whatever the object of love, anything which hinders a true love for God may cause a Christian to lose his first love even as was true of Ephesus so long ago”
(John Walvoord)

5. To love anything more than God is idolatry

E. This love is the fervent enthusiasm of a new believer

1. It is similar to the love of a newly married couple

2. Yet as with many marriages, that initial ardour soon wanes
3. The word “honeymoon” originated in the 16th century to indicate the height of sweetness in the first month of marriage that would soon begin to wane as the moon
4. The Ephesian’s religion had begun with deep fervency of love and devotion to Christ, but over time it had become cold and mediocre.
5. Note that it is possible, at least for a time, to maintain a strict orthopraxy (right practice) and orthodoxy (right doctrine), while leaving one’s orthopathy (right affections).

F. Factors in leaving the first love

1. The second generation of believers are prone to this (Judges 2:7-13)
2. Their wars against sin and error had hardened them toward the Lord
3. In their fighting against enemies *without* they had overlooked the enemy *within*

G. The final result if this problem is neglected

1. Christ will come in judgment (1 Peter 4:17)
2. The candlestick will be removed – they would cease to be a church in God’s sight

II. THE PRESCRIPTION FOR CURE (5)

A. Remember

1. Remember what you were and what Christ saved you from (Deuteronomy 15:15)
2. Remember the price that was paid for your salvation (Luke 22:19-20)
3. Remember the love, peace, joy, and strength you previously had, and see how far you have fallen

B. Repent

1. Repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of action
2. The lost sinner must repent to be saved
3. The saint must continually repent as he is sanctified

C. Repeat

1. They were are labouring church, yet they are told to “do the first works”
2. They were labouring out of *duty* but they needed to labour out of *love*
3. The elder brother in the parable of the Prodigal laboured diligently, but with a heart full of pride and envy (Luke 15:25-32)
4. They needed, like Mary, to choose “that good part” (Luke 10:38-42)

5. Love makes the burden lighter (Genesis 29:20)

CONCLUSION

1. Do you have a personal knowledge of this “first love” that is related here?
2. How do you know when you have lost your first love of the Lord?
 - ✓ You don't pray as much.
 - ✓ You don't spend time with the Lord anymore.
 - ✓ You don't spend time with the Lord's people.
 - ✓ You aren't able to get along with others because you can't get your way.
 - ✓ You spend more time talking about people and their faults than you do praying for them.
 - ✓ You aren't able to forgive people.
3. Too often we deal with the symptoms of our spiritual problems, rather than the root
4. God wants, above all, our hearts (2 Corinthians 8:5)
5. “Lovest thou me?” (John 21:15-17)

*Lord, it is my chief complaint
That my love is weak and faint;
Yet I love thee, and adore;
O for grace to love thee more!*