

# Thou Hast Left Thy First Love

*Is Your Church on Fire for God*

By David McClelland

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** Revelation 2:4

**Preached on:** Sunday, June 30, 2002

## **Grace Free Presbyterian Church**

11 Colby Road

Litchfield, NH 03052

**Website:** [www.fpcna.org/fpcna\\_church\\_detail.asp?churchid=litchfield](http://www.fpcna.org/fpcna_church_detail.asp?churchid=litchfield)

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/grace](http://www.sermonaudio.com/grace)

Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.<sup>1</sup>

Let's end our reading at verse seven and trusting that the Lord will add his blessing. And bowing our heads now we are going to pray that the Lord would minister to us through this passage of his inspired and infallible book. Let's all pray.

*Our Father, we do thank you that as we continue in this worship service we come now to the preaching of thy Word and, oh God, we often remind ourselves of the great distance that there is between the gospel treasure and the earthen vessel. And we know, Lord, that no man in his own strength is sufficient for these things. Oh God, we see it to be an act of mercy that thou should give to any man the privilege or the opportunity of ministering the Word of the living God. Lord, who is sufficient for these things? Yet we thank thee today our sufficiency is of God. And so, Lord, we look not to any man, but we look to thee. We do pray for thy help, for thy strength, for thy enlightenment, oh God, for thy quickening. We do pray for thy conviction and thy reproofing. We would ask thee, oh God, for thine encouragement and for thy gracious loving reassurance that we so often need. Our Father, we come to the Word of God today and pray again that the Spirit will lead us into all truth. Lord, don't leave us to our own imagination. Don't leave us to a set of principles that will be nothing more than that which suit our own carnal reasoning. But,*

---

<sup>1</sup> Revelation 2:1-7.

*oh God, lead us into all truth and cause us to see that the fullness and in reminding ourselves that we are to adhere to the whole counsel of truth. And, Father, I pray for health and strength this morning. Give to me the power in the Holy Ghost to glorify the Lord in the way we speak this morning. So come upon us. Give us ears to hear. Give us mouths to speak. We wait upon thee. Our hearts are expectant of what thou wilt do in these next moments for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.*

You know, there is an inherent desire within fallen man to please his fellow creatures. You remember as Paul exhorted the servants he said, "Obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers."<sup>2</sup>

I am sure that at some time you have come across a man pleaser. I remember working with one. It was in a painting... a couple of painters here. I remember working with this fellow and he would do very little until the boss would walk by and then he would paint like no one I have ever seen. And his efforts, then, were with eye service as a man pleaser.

Well, the apostle comes to such men and he says, "No, you are not to serve as a man pleaser, but you are to serve God from the heart."

Now this desire to please man is something we don't only see in our employment, but we see it really everywhere. Every different place we look we may see those who are described as men pleasers and that includes the Church.

You see, the last 20 years the Christian Church has taken on the role of men pleasing. The idea really is that whatever they want we will give them. Whatever is going to please them, that is our agenda. What type of theology, what type of music, whatever it is they want. And so this seeker sensitivity is foremost in a spiritual climate that is willing to sacrifice even truth to make sure people are pleased with their production.

We are to remind ourselves often the words of the Lord himself though the apostle Paul, "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."<sup>3</sup>

And, you know, our chief task in life, whatever it is we do, we need to make sure that we are not men pleasers, but God pleasers. Does our family please God? Does the relationship we enter into with our children and between mother and fathers, is that pleasing to God? Is our employment and the way we conduct ourselves, is that something that pleases God?

What we do today, does this please God?

---

<sup>2</sup> Colossians 3:22.

<sup>3</sup> Galatians 1:10.

You see, that is the most important question. It doesn't matter who is pleased with what we do here today. The question is, far more important: Is God pleased with what we do as we gather to worship his holy name?

Now in the second and third chapters of Revelation you have God's message to the seven churches of Asia. And there is nothing here to suggest that these seven churches were anything but literal churches, seven different churches. And if you accept Revelation one and 19 to be the key verse of this book where we read, "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter,"<sup>4</sup> it is a fairly common interpretation throughout different eschatological viewpoints that this first chapter is describing that which has been seen. The third and the fourth chapter describing those things that are and then the remaining chapters the things which shall be hereafter. And whatever degree, I will leave that for you to work out in your own time.

In other words, Christ selected seven churches out of Asia in order to get across a specific message. Now were there other churches? Of course there were. Were there other churches that had virtues as these churches? Yes, there were. Were there churches that had sins like these churches? I believe we must say yes there as well.

But I believe the Lord selected these seven churches to illustrate to us the spiritual conditions, all spiritual conditions possible in the Church until he returns.

Now at the very end of this letter to the Ephesians there is a great challenge.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."<sup>5</sup>

At that point we ought to be keenly interested in what he says if we have not been already. What was the Lord saying here? Any man that has an ear, every man that has an ear must hear what the Spirit is saying unto these churches.

And so it is not enough for us to say, "Well, that was written for the Ephesians," because every man that has an ear must hear what was said.

And so we see that here are things for us to learn and when you sum up the seven of these letters, the sum of them is this: What is pleasing to God and what is not pleasing to God. And so we ought to pay close heed, then, of what pleases God especially as we come together to worship on this day.

Now the question is: Is God pleased with what we are doing here? If there be any doubt, then all the more we need to pay attention because we are going to find out what pleases him not only in the church setting, but also in our individual lives.

It is my purpose this morning to share with you one verse that stands out in particular in this letter to the Ephesian Church. And I trust there will be something for us all to learn.

---

<sup>4</sup> Revelation 1:19.

<sup>5</sup> Revelation 2:7.

Did you notice here as we begin this reading and verse number one, “Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things...”<sup>6</sup>

What does it mean by “angel”? Well, the word simply means messenger. And we understand, as the Scripture would indicate in the previous chapter that this angel was the pastor or the leader or the overseer of the church.

And so, “Unto the [pastor] of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.”<sup>7</sup>

My, these are tremendous things. Notice who is speaking. Well, there is no mistake. It is the Lord Jesus Christ because he is the one who holds the seven stars in his hand and that is a great privilege for anyone called to the ministry or anyone serving the Lord because the stars, we are told very clearly, are those messengers. And the Lord holds his messengers in the grasp of his hand.

My, that is something that ought to give any minister a tremendous comfort. But not only does he hold every minister as a star in his hand, “He walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.”<sup>8</sup>

Now the candlesticks, we know, that is the Church. And so we are told here that not only does the Lord hold the minister in his hand, but he walks in the midst of his people. And that ought to give us great encouragement.

Notice in verse number two something of the Lord’s omniscience. He says, “I know thy works.”<sup>9</sup>

In other words, this one speaking here he has the ability to not only see the outward appearance, but he can see the heart. And he begins to look at this Church in Ephesus.

He says, “I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil.”<sup>10</sup>

My, these are tremendous words.

And then it goes on to say, “And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.”<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Revelation 2:1.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Revelation 2:2.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Revelation 2:3.

What a commendation was made to the Church in Ephesus. But not only was there was a condemnation there was a great charge in verse number four.

“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”<sup>12</sup>

That statement has been in my heart. And as we considered loving our brothers and sisters in Christ last Lord’s Day, I think this verse caught my attention as focusing again where our love ought to be. Leaving the first love, the love for the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

I want, then, to consider that statement, “Thou hast left thy first love,”<sup>13</sup> and point out three things that I think are contained therein.

The first thing is there is here definitely a stern rebuke. “Thou hast left thy first love.”<sup>14</sup>

After the words of commendation there is a stain here on the garment of the Church that is pointed out. “Nevertheless...” I mean, after all that I have said here, all those good things and all those things to be commended, “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee.”<sup>15</sup>

Now this translation is slightly misleading for we use the word “somewhat” in a very light manner. We use the word “somewhat” meaning some degree.

“I am somewhat hot right now.”

That is the way we would use such a word. But literally this statement reads this. “I have something to accuse you of and something to blame you for.”

Now this accusation against the Church was not a judicial accusation. My, if God were to make a judicial accusation against any one of us we would be finished because as he looks at us what does he see? Every one of us are to be accused and every one of us are to be blamed. But as he looks at his Church here he knows that he sees his Church in his Son.

And yet notice the strength of the language here. I think the strength of language here and the sternness, it demands immediately our attention. And how characteristic is it of our Lord that he first of all puts foremost all those things that he can approve: their faith, their hope, their labor, their patience. If then only after this he notices their short coming. He says, “Thou hast left thy first love.”<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Revelation 2:4.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Now I want you to notice this rebuke that it is a singular rebuke. “Thou... Thou hast left thy first love.”<sup>17</sup>

You know, I think there is one argument for continuing to use the translation we use. That word “thou” is a very powerful word.

Do you remember the story of David after he had fallen grievously into sin with Bathsheba? And some time after the prophet Nathan came to David and he began to speak to him of a story, a story of a rich man who had exceeding many flocks and herds and about a story of a man who had but one ewe lamb.

The story is told here that this rich man, he had many flocks, many herds. But this one man who had the one ewe lamb, it was almost a part of his family. I mean everything he did was to look after this one only possession that he had. And the story goes on to say that there was a wayfaring man coming by one day to the rich man’s house and the rich man rather than take one from the flock that he had, he went and he took the one man’s little ewe lamb and David was incensed.

Who could do such a thing? How could anybody be so cold hearted to think surely that man is worthy of death?

Nathan said to David, “Thou art the man. Thou art the man.”<sup>18</sup>

And, you know, when David heard those words there was no escape because the rebuke he received was a singular rebuke. And in some sense what we have before us is very similar. I tell you the Ephesians Church had no way around this one.

“Thou hast left thy first love.”<sup>19</sup>

I have a game at home. I know our sister Carol Carter has played it and greatly enjoyed it. It is called Pass the Bomb. It is a game that you take this little bomb in the hand and you press the button and it begins to tick and you have got anywhere between 10 seconds and two minutes to get rid of it. And you have to come up with a word starting with the letters they give you and once you get the word you pass the bomb as fast as you can.

Oh, often time the bomb didn’t get passed and the word never came up, but I will say no more about that.

I think sometimes that is the way we treat the Word of God. You know, sometimes God’s rebukes, his commandments come to us like bombs. And what is our first reaction? It is to pass the bomb. Pass it on to the next guy. Surely this is not speaking to me. I don’t want anything to do with this, because this is far too pointed an accusation.

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> 2 Samuel 12:7.

<sup>19</sup> Revelation 2:4.

But I tell you, as the Ephesians Church had to answer up to this, so do you and I. And, furthermore, so does this church because every man that hath an ear must hear what is being said.

I wonder this morning, may it be said of us? After all that we have done and said, all that we have accomplished for the cause of Christ, nevertheless the Lord has something against us and thou hast left thy first love. Is it true of us? Have we left our first love?

You see, there is no escape in this. I mean, you can put off God's commands and his rebukes as long as you want, but you have to come sooner or later to accept that there is a bomb in your lap and you must do something with it. Have you left your first love?

I wonder if it is true of us as it was true of David that when he heard those words, my, he was nailed. Maybe as you sit in the pew this morning and you hear these words, "Thou hast left thy first love," the Word of God comes to your heart and you know, you know that God is speaking to you.

My, you may think that, well, I don't want to hear again what the pastor has to say.

But do you know what? I need not worry because the Word of God speaks for itself. And you know if God is saying this to you that you have left your first love. This is a very singular rebuke.

I want you to notice something else and that is it is a surprising rebuke.

Do you know as far as the onlookers were concerned the Church of Ephesus was successful in every way?

"I know thy works. I know thy labor, thy patience. I know that you cannot bear with evil."

My, here was a church that had pure doctrine. They could not bear with evil. They also had pure practice. We'll believe if you continue to read on.

And let me tell you the commendation made of this church was no small attainment. And I think that in our day if we as a church are able to gain from the God of heaven half this commendation, we will be most thankful.

Well, what then in common terms was the problem? Well, the problem was that there was program, but there was no passion. Everything looked ok. They had the whole program up and running, but the passion of the whole works was gone.

Well, that can happen right here. Oh, we might have a Sunday school. We don't, but we may, could have a Christian school. We might have our outreach teams. We might have our men's meetings and our women's meetings, our men's retreats and our women's

retreats. We might have our camps for the youth. We may have our monthly meetings for our youth. We might have our prayer meetings. And everyone would look in to see this is the appearance all of a flourishing ministry and yet the Lord may still come and say, "I have a charge against you because you have left your first love."

What a surprise. What a surprise that it was said of the Church of Ephesus that they had left their first love? And now to the public the Ephesian Church was successful. But to Christ it had fallen.

My friends, what about you as an individual? You know, as you sit in the pew this morning and your friends look to you and, my they say, "Well, here is a man who witnesses and here is a woman who I have heard her pray before and here is one who I know is involved in all sorts of works of benevolence. And I know this person does this and this and this."

And yet the surprising truth of the matter is that even you, today, have lost your first love.

My friends, how long, how long will we go on? What are we waiting for? Are we going to deny it any further or will we say to the Lord today, "Lord, you are absolutely right. You have put your finger upon something and it hurts, but, yes, it is true"?

You see, there are two things we learn here from this surprising rebuke and the first is that labor is no substitute for love.

You know, I think with all the... there is this idea if we only labor more our efforts will be more pleasing. Let me remind you as I remind myself. What pleases God is not our work for him, but our need of him. That is what pleases God. It is not how much you do for him, but how much you need him.

And, you know, it is easier to labor than it is to love.

Mr. Spurgeon had this to say. "If there is anything to be done actively for Christ I instinctively prefer the active exercise to the passive quiet of his presence."

How true that is. My, it is easy to do outward things for the Lord and to labor for him because you can labor with a stone hold cold heart, but that waiting in his presence, that passion for who he is, that is a hard thing. And we cannot begin to substitute our love for our labor or labor for our love.

What does the Lord ask of us? Well, you know, in Mary and Martha's case Martha was a great laborer. And I tell you the Lord said that Mary, she chose the better part. I think Mary chose the more difficult part. It is hard to wait on the Lord and to enjoy him than it is to work for him.

And, you know, the Scripture tells us to obey is better than to sacrifice. I think we can might also say to love is better to labor. Now that is not to separate these two things

because a man who loves will labor, but I think that point stands. There is within us some idea that we will make it up to God. You know, if we are out of touch with him what do we want to do? Well, I will go to this meeting and I will do this and I will do that. You can't make it up to God.

What does he desire of you? He says, "My son, give me thine heart."<sup>20</sup> That is what he wants. He wants our hearts. He wants the passion that was [?] in us and we cannot exchange labor for love.

There is something else I think we might learn from this surprising rebuke and that is that no church or theology is immune from such a surprising rebuke. This was the Church at Ephesus. This was the church that Paul was in, that Timothy was in, that John was in. This was a good church. In fact, we might look at all of these and say, "This was one of the best churches." And yet here is a best church for all of the programs and they had lost the passion.

I don't ever think that the Free Presbyterian Church or reformed doctrine will ever keep us from this surprising rebuke because sometimes the reformed church... I tell you, if there is one place they need to be watchful it is in this area right here. As our brother Tom said to me before someone described Presbyterianism as being that great mighty ocean going vessel with all of its sails in full splendor and yet they are still in the harbor, never left. And, you know, we need to fuel and we need to go forward. We need to go forward with a passion for Jesus Christ.

Remember what Paul said to young Timothy. He said, "Take heed unto... the doctrine."<sup>21</sup>

But do you know what he said before that? He said, "Take heed unto thyself. Take heed unto thyself."<sup>22</sup>

And do you know if you are willing today to take heed unto yourself, in most cases the doctrine will take heed of itself. You must come to him and make the admission today if this Lord's Word rebukes you that we have left our first love.

My friend, how is it with you? Does this come as a surprise to you? Oh, your theology is right. Your attendance is good. Your witness is faithful. It might be said of you that you are engaging in work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope. The truth is that you have lost your first love and your religion has become nothing more than a mechanical face where you go through the motions. Yes, you are strong against heresy. The problem is you have become tolerant of formalism. It is a mere going through the motions.

"I know thy works."<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Proverbs 23:26.

<sup>21</sup> 1 Timothy 4:16.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Revelation 2:4.

I said the question is to us today: Why should we hide? Why should we hide? Because God knows. We don't need to pretend to be something that we are not because the Lord comes in mercy today and he puts his finger upon it and, my friend, why go on another day? Why would you decide to go on another day when you know this is the problem? How long is it going to take? What will the Lord have to do to awaken you to the fact that you have left your first love?

You keep putting it off and as you sit here today you have every intention of putting off again. And you will leave this place and pretend that all is well when all is not well. And you will go on again talking of the Lord when you know your talk is nothing more than hypocrisy and you will leave here talking about all the people you witnessed to this week and the truth is that you have left your first love.

It is a surprising rebuke.

I want to tell you something else and that is that it is a solemn rebuke. You see, the Ephesians had not lost their first love, but they had simply left him. The local church—and indeed every believer—is espoused to Christ.

You know, in 2 Corinthians in 11 and two Paul said, “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”<sup>24</sup>

Do you know what the church is being charged here with? Abandonment. Abandonment.

You picture a gracious bridegroom giving to his wife all her need and more. And yet she picks up for no apparent reason and she leaves. That is what the accusation is.

Well, thank God that we have no fair weather lover in Jesus Christ because he never leaves us. He never leaves us nor forsakes us. And what the accusation is here is not that God has left them, but that they have left the Lord. And, do you know, the amazing thing is, child of God, as we ask ourselves today: Why do I leave him? Here is the one who has loved me unto death. Here is the one who has never given me any reason to doubt his love for faithfulness. He, as my bridegroom, has given himself unreservedly every day. And yet today the truth be known, I bless him. I turn my back on him and I go on in mere formalism.

Child of God, what is it that the Lord has done for you today that causes you today to leave him? Well, there is nothing. There is no reason to leave him. I wonder today do we question ourselves? We question his faithfulness, his patience and his long suffering. We ask ourselves why do we live him for he has never left us? It has been a solemn rebuke, “Thou hast left thy first love.”<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:2.

<sup>25</sup> Revelation 2:4.

I want you to notice in the second place here not only do you have a stern rebuke, but you have a very sad reality. Notice the condition of this Ephesians Church. The sad reality is that these Ephesians are not today what they once used to be.

You see, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil."<sup>26</sup>

And verse number five we are told here that they are to look back and to think what they once were. And so the condition here in the sad reality is that what these people once were is not what they are today.

My friend, we need to stop and ask ourselves is that the same with us? You know, if we begin to talk and say what we once were and what we used to do and how often we were [?] how often we did this. And the sad reality is that we have left our perfect and our love in Christ. We need to live for today. We can't be living on by-gones. We must live and consider what it is we need to do this day.

You know, as I turn to the book of Matthew and verse... chapter 22 and verse number 36... An inquiring disciple or one who would come to seek to be a disciple comes to the Lord and he says:

Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.<sup>27</sup>

Did you ever think that you are making great progress in your sanctification? Did you ever think, my, the Lord has really done tremendous things and I have gone a long way? Bring yourself back to the sum of the entire law. It is to love the Lord God with all of your heart, all of your mind, your soul and your strength.

Friends, do we do that? Do we really love him? Do we really love Jesus Christ and act as if we do?

Do you know what you have before us here is a people who were reminded of what they once were. And, you know, brethren, we can stop this day and think back to what we once were. What was the love we had for the Lord when we first came to Christ? Do you remember that excitement? Do you remember the zeal that was in your heart? Do you remember shortly after you were saved you had a desire to tell everybody you knew? Do you remember when there was a meeting at the Church? My, you couldn't... and you were generally the first person there. Do you remember if there was any function you were the one involved because you had a passion for him?

Today the truth be known in some cases maybe that passion is gone.

---

<sup>26</sup> Revelation 2:2.

<sup>27</sup> Matthew 22:36-38.

You know there is a hymn that we sin, 472. And it is a sad recollection of a man looking back to what he once was or to what he once enjoyed. 472, let me read to you the second and the third verse.

The hymn is called *O for a Closer Walk with God*.

Where is that blessedness I knew  
When first I saw the Lord?  
Where is the soul refreshing view  
Of Jesus and His Word?

What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!  
How sweet their mem'ry still!  
But they have left an aching void  
The world can never fill.

The said reality: This people were not what they once were. And though we today, what we should be, are we living on past glory? Is this Church where it should be or do we live on the passion of men who have gone before?

I tell you we need to come to the Lord today and pray, "Lord, breathe on us. Breathe on us and give us a passion for our Savior."

My we love it, but how often does the passion disappear.

Well, not only when you consider the sad reality here do you see the condition, but you will notice the cost. Or we might consider the cost, better to say.

Why do we lose our first love? Oh, we could sit down, I think, and take suggestions from every one why one might lose this passion. I bring just a few to your attention for consideration. Have we lost our first love because of our business?

You know, of all temptation to which God's children are exposed, this is the worst because it is the one that we do not dread and therefore it is a subtle temptation. There is other things that we dread and we no, man, we have to stay away from them. But here is something so subtle because it is something we all are in and something we must do every day.

Child of God, has your business robbed you of your passion for Christ? Oh, that the Lord would give us that consideration that we are not even laborers on this earth, but we are laborers in heaven. And though the Lord call us all to some type of labor on this earth, yet our chief task is to lay up treasures that are in heaven.

Maybe today you have lost your first love because of the company you keep. You know, when you begin to find comfort in those who trample underneath their feet the blood of

Christ, don't be surprised if before too long you are without your first love. You can't stay constantly in the company of the world and remain and keep your passion for him.

Maybe the problem this morning is familiarity. You know, in a few weeks time or in a weeks time we are going to be going home to Toronto and there as we meet our family having not seen some of them for a year there is going to be great excitement and great joy and great love. But, you know, if we were to say, "Ok, we are not going back again. We are staying here," give them about a week and a half and the novelty would wear off and back again we would be the same old same old.

So sometimes I think that is our problem with the things of the Lord. We become so used to being redeemed, being justified, having sins forgiven. Oh, that God will stop us today and may we never be used to being saved, but may it excite us every time we think of what he has done.

And then forgetfulness. Well, you know, sometimes we forget how much we owe Christ. And every day you wake up you are as much a debtor to the blood of Christ as the day in which you were saved, every day. Christ has given his life. And, my, how quickly do we forget all of his goodness.

I think another cause of our losing our first love is our communion. You know, to love Christ is to be dependent on him and to be near to him. You will never have a passion for Christ if you are not in his work. You can't... You can't have a passion for Christ if you are not in his work. You can't have a passion for him if you are not in the place of prayer. It just can't happen. And so today you feel your passion beginning to slide out, you must come back to those first things. What is the prayer life like? How have you been reading the Scriptures?

Why, may the Lord bring us back even this day and remove us from every one of these causes.

Let's consider our final thought this morning. Consider the stern rebuke, the sad reality. I want you to notice there is a solemn responsibility.

You know, the Lord never made them aware of this problem to have them in despair. But he had to them a very certain responsibility.

Let's look at verse number five. After we read the accusation, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works."<sup>28</sup>

The first thing, then, that they are called to do is to remember and that remembrance is a very important thing. You see, as we remember from where we have fallen, you know where we were when we first met Christ, it will allow us to see the joy that we could experience or could have experienced contrasted with what we are presently facing.

---

<sup>28</sup> Revelation 2:5.

You know, if you have lost your passion for Christ, I dare say that you are a frustrated individual. And as you look at the frustration and you think back to what you experienced before, it is that remembrance that will give you a longing for what you once had. As you remember you will think. If you had remained in that state how much for Christ you could have done. You think if we continued every day with the zeal and passion that we had the day we were saved, what could be accomplished for him? And as we think of that does it not cause us then to desire to get back to where we could be used again?

When you think back to what you were you remind yourself of the attainment you could have made. Think if you had continued in the Scripture study the way you first did and the time you invested in laying up treasure in heaven. Today you would have a tremendous grasp of his Word. You would be a man or woman strong in the place of prayer. And as you look back, then, you ought to begin to desire that the Lord would bring you this place again.

And one final thought considering remembering. That is there is nothing quite like remembrance to lead one on to repentance. I think the best example of that in the life of Peter, a man who definitely lost his first love and we see it graphically in his denial of Christ. And do you remember that morning and Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him?

“Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.”<sup>29</sup>

Now that is what the Lord want today. The Lord wants us to simply think of what it was before and the very recollection of the nearness, the dearness of what he has been to us, I am telling you it will break your heart. It will break your heart.

And so the task for each one of us, then, is to remember.

My friend, don't ever be afraid of being honest. I feel sometimes in the Church setting we are afraid to let others know that we have failed. Let me tell you the greatest preacher I know and have constant encouragement from him, Mr. Spurgeon. As he came to preach on this passage let me tell you what he told his congregation.

“I feel that I who preach shall this night condemn myself. And my prayer before I entered this pulpit was that I might fearlessly discharge my duty, that I might deal honestly with my own heart and that I might preach knowing myself to be the chief culprit and you in each your measure to have offended in this respect even though none of you so grievously as I have done. I pray that God the Holy Spirit through my renewings may apply the Word not merely to your hearts, but to mine that I may return to my first love and that you may return with me.”

---

<sup>29</sup> Mark 14:72.

Don't ever be afraid of being honest. Let's be honest to God today. Are we what we should be? Are we what we once were?

My, there is no point struggling. You know, to be afraid to tell others what we are is nothing more than our own pride. We can confess to the Lord we are failures and that we have grieved his Spirit time and time again. My friends, he brings you to repentance and it is only in his mercy that he does. He does not do so to cast you down, but that he might again embrace you in the fullness of your mercy.

So they are to remember, but notice what else the Scripture tells us here. They are to remember, but it also tells us that they were to do the first works.

Maybe today you feel you need a restoration. You know, you have had little passion for the things of Christ and you long to return, but you just don't know how to get back.

Some suppose that this will come back to us again by silent meditation. Some feel that it will be supernatural influence. And so they wait for some visitation of the Lord to come back upon us and to give again that passion. And all the while what does the Lord say? He says, "Do the first works. Do the first works."<sup>30</sup>

Mr. Barnes commented, "Let them read the Bible as they once did. Let them pray as they did then. Let them go forth in active duty that the benevolence that they did then. Let them engage in teaching a Sunday school class as they did then. Let them lead the distressed and instruct the ignorant, raise up the fallen as they did then. Let them open their heart, their purse, their hand as they did then to bless a dying world."

My friends, don't wait. Don't wait for the supernatural power of heaven to descend into your soul to give you a passion because the Lord says, "Do the first works. Get back to what you know and now you will find your passion will burst up and will flow forth even as a fountain from the depths."

As we come, then, to the end of this consideration of the passage I want you to notice that there is two possibilities here. They have been charged with something and the two possibilities are this. Either they are to remember and therefore repent or else there is going to be a removal.

Verse number five. "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."<sup>31</sup>

You know, the meaning is that the Church gave light in Ephesus and what he would do in regard to that place would be like removing a lamp from the place in darkness. My, that is a fearful thing.

---

<sup>30</sup> Revelation 2:5.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

What should it be to Litchfield if the Lord removes the lamp of this congregation? We are finished. We are absolutely finished. The center of all that we do here, while the program is important, it is the passion for Christ and it is the only thing that will see us through the years.

Now what does it mean to the individual? Mr. Spurgeon said, again, "If you fall from your first love, be sure as ever the Lord is a Father that he will let you have the rod if your love cools. The true child of God when his love declines must and shall smart for it."

The Lord wants us back again and sometimes he deals with us in harsh fashion that we might come back again. Friends, what do we need? We need today the Spirit of God to send his power into our lives, to renew the passion, to bring again that excitement at the preaching of the gospel, that it come again where it is not a drudge to read the Scriptures, but we delight in it and that every meeting is a place we want to be, not that we should be.

Oh, may God cause then our first love to return even this day because not only does the Lord today invite you to come unto him again for restoration, but I believe in another place of Scripture he makes you a tremendous promise. He says that the years, the months, the days, the hours and the minutes that the locusts have eaten will be restored. God will restore them unto you. Have you wasted years? Have you wasted time? You come unto him today. You come to the place he wants you to be and that is in close fellowship with him and he will restore to you 100 fold and he will give back to you the wasted time.

May God help each one of us, then, to consider this stern rebuke, to ponder its sad reality and think of the solemn responsibility.

What is it going to be? Is it going to be repentance or is it going to be removal?

May God give each one of us repentance, that gift he gives us in saving faith. May he give it to us again as we continue to walk with him for his name's sake and for the furtherance of his kingdom.