

Title: The Church that Left Its First Love(Part 1)

Text: Revelation 2:1-7

Tonight, I would like to begin a new series of messages from the book of Revelation concerning the 7 churches of Asia. Therefore, we are going to be studying chapters 2 and 3 in the Revelation of John.

So, take your Bibles and turn with me to Revelation chapter 2. The book of Revelation chapter 2 beginning at Vs 1 on the subject: THE CHURCH THAT LEFT ITS FIRST LOVE.

(Read 2:1-7)

Prayer

In Vs 1 John writes: "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, and the one who walks among the seven golden lampstands."

Now, what does all that mean? Look back, please, at chapter 1 verse 20. Here the Lord explained that the seven golden lampstands were the seven churches.

One of the great titles of the Christian is that he is the light of the world(Matt 5:14). But one old Greek scholar has a wise and penetrating comment on this. He says that the churches are called, not the light itself, but the lampstand on which the light is set; because it is not the churches, themselves, which produce the light; but the giver of the light-namely Jesus. Thus, the church is only the vessel within which the light shines, and within which the light is contained. So, the christian's light is, always, a borrowed light, for he shines not with his own light, but with the reflection of the light of Jesus Christ....(And I like that)

The thing to remember, dear friends, is that the light that we have comes from Jesus who is always in the center of His true church.

Now, what were the seven stars in His hand? Vs 20 says that they are "the angels of the seven churches."

There are many, many interpretations as to the meaning of that phrase. But, I believe the content suggest that each "angel" is the leader of the church.

~~makes it clear that each "angel" is the leader of the church.~~ ^{to believe} And so might well be equated with its minister ^{of} pastor. It is a very humbling ~~thought~~ thought to realize that God hold his preachers in His hand. ^{Now} Without a doubt these letters were written to seven churches which actually existed at that time, yet they hold ~~gospel~~ truth for churches and believers of all ages. [In this message and the ones to come, I would hope that we can try to learn ~~the~~ the lessons that Jesus taught concerning the churches of Asia. Then make the leap of faith and apply the lessons to our church of today.

One expression Jesus uses as He begins each letter is "I know your works" (Verse 2). ^{You see} Jesus, Jesus looks down today into our church and he knows all that is going on. And I am sure that he is pleased with many things that are happening around here. But, ^I am sure He is dissatisfied with many things. I am sure God is not pleased as he sees many of our people doing things for their own glory and not for His. Many of our people go through a form of religion - they are comfortable in their pews - and this attitude must cause God grief.

^{So,} ~~let us~~ ^{Look at} let us see what Jesus wrote to the church at Ephesus. ^{tonight} ~~In this message~~ I would like us to look at the good things God saw in the Ephesian church. Next Sunday ^{evening} morning, we will look at the one thing God found seriously wrong with this church ^{at Ephesus}.

I. ^{First of all} Jesus said that the church of Ephesus was a working church.

This was a church that was doing ^{something} things - a church that was getting results for God. I am afraid that ^{for} many churches, today, are just piles of brick and stone where a few members come in once a week and go through a form, and ^{then} where the Lord and the church are forgotten for ^{the rest of the} another week.

There are three kinds of people in every church. First, there are the SHIRKERS, who never do anything for the Lord. Their names are on the roll, but they are content for the other people to do all the working, praying, and

giving. Then there are the JERKERS. These people are like a car I once owned. It would start just fine - then give a little jerk - and ~~then~~ stop. Many of our ^{Christ} people are like that. They start well, but they soon go back to indifference - they can't be counted upon. Then there are the WORKERS. You can count on these people. They will be working for the Lord. Not because they have to, or because they might receive a reward, but because they simple love Jesus and they desire to do his will.

A church would die if it where not for the workers. The church of Ephesus was made up of workers, and Jesus commended them for it. Our church has many fine worker - and God has blessed us because ~~of~~ their dedication and committment.

2. ²⁻¹⁵⁻⁵³ Jesus said that the church of Ephesus was a PATIENT church.

Appearantly the people were suffering great persecution, but they didn't give up. They bore it all with courage and constancy. They were patient. They knew that if they were true to Christ, He would bring them through. We have read of Christians bearing up under persecution in such a way as to influence even their enemies to come to Christ. This must have been true of these Ephesian Christians.

We need to learn the lesson of patience in all things. One of my greatest ~~faults~~ faults in my first church was my impatience. I was full of enthusaisam and I was going in a hundred direction. My high School sponsor, a sweet man of God, said to me one Sunday morning, "Bill, you have a lot of great ideas, but you need to slow down and wait for us to catch up." It has taken God many years to teach me patience. In many areas of my life, I am still learning.

I certainly do not think that any Christian should be lazy. We must do our best, but we must patiently wait upon the Lord to bring forth fruit.

Pattiness - and God Commend that Church a Ephesus for
 Their patience -

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3. JESUS SAID THEY COULD NOT BEAR THOSE WHO WERE EVIL. *I like that.*

One reason ^{many} ~~our~~ churches today have no power is because many of ^{the} ~~our~~ members are living sinful lives. The church at Ephesus said, "We don't want any members unless they are truly Christians. We must show the world that we are different because we have been with Jesus." If ~~the~~ ^{the} church has too little influence over the ^{the} ~~world~~, it is because ~~the~~ ^{the} world has too much influence over the church.

A powerful church and a sinful church membership do not go together. I have already mention ^{that} ~~an~~ old car that I use to own. This car had one other problem. When ever it rained and a little mosture got on the motor, it would stop. It would not run. ^{you see} The element which didn't belong there nullified the usefulness of the element which gave the engine power. The point is that many of are so called church members, the SHIRKERS, nullify and neutralize the power of the good elements ^{members} in the church.

I realize that the day of church discipline is about over. You can do anything today and still remain in good standing in the majoirity of our c/ churches, but it was not so with the Ephesian church. They made it difficult for people who were SHIRKERS, to stay in good standing. Their members had to live lives which were testimonies. Maybe we ought to raise our standards. ^{standards} As we read the N.T. we see many thing that we should be doing and we should not be doing.

and (REad Galations 6:19-24)

Faithful

4. Jesus said that the church of Ephesus was a Faithful Church. (3)

How How was the church faithful? *Two Ways*

(1) I believe the church was faithful in preaching the ^{message} ~~doctrine~~ of rependance.

The message of repentance runs throughout the Bible. It is the main ^{one of} theme of the Bible. The prophets cried out for the people of their day to repent. Jesus preached repentance. All of the N.T. preachers preached repentance. We need to preach the doctrine of repentance But the preaching of repentance is a lost note in many churches today. What a sad commentary this is. The only way to get to God is first of all to repent of sin. Yet thousands of people who know nothing of repentance are taken into our churches. Repentance is a change of heart and mind, a turning from sin to God. But many people have never had this experience. They have never had a broken and contrite heart over their sins. They have never cried out from the depths of their souls, "God, be merciful to me a sinner."

There is no substitute for repentance. Baptism, church membership, good works, a clean life, none of these can ever take the place of repentance. Jesus said, "Except you repent, you shall all like wise perish." And it still holds true today. If a church is a true N.T. Church, it will always sound out the message of repentance.

(2) They were faithful in calling upon men to confess their faith in Jesus as Saviour. Repentance and faith go hand in hand. If you really and truly repent of your sins, you will public confess your faith in Christ. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

(3) The church of Ephesus was faithful in witnessing. The members ~~were~~ ^{were} zealous in spreading the Gospel. There are two great words in the Christian religion. They are "Come" and "go". Everyone who has come to Christ is under obligation to go with the Gospel to someone else. Christ died for all men and it is our ~~business~~ ^{business} to make Him known to all men.

These ~~These~~ *are* were many wonderful things about the Ephesian Church. But Christ rebuked it for one great fault. Next Sunday we will study that sin and see if there is any application for our lives.

CONCLUSION:

Now, how can our church expect the "well done" of Jesus? Simply by being all that we ought to be and doing all that we ought to do as lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ. This responsibility falls upon each individual Christian. My friends, if you are not living close to Christ, if you are not serving Him, *witness to* ~~faithful to~~ Him, If your faith is not warm and strong, if you are not ~~faithful to~~ Him, I pray that you will repent and begin a new life tonight.

Let's close in prayer
