

*(The Priority of Love)*

Title: The Church that left its First Love  
Part 2

Text: Revelation 2:1-7 *Turn to Rev 2:1-7*  
*Prayer*

Last Sunday night we started <sup>a</sup> ~~our~~ study of the 7 churches of Asia. *And*  
~~we looked~~ *at* the Church of Ephesus. This <sup>evening</sup> ~~morning~~ I would like to continue  
our study of the Ephesian church. The Lord Jesus wrote them a letter,  
pointing out various things that existed in the church. He began His  
letter ~~with~~ by commending them. He said that they were <sup>so</sup> active, <sup>just</sup> that they  
were patient, that they couldn't stand evil people, and that they were  
faithful. Now, you would think that this would be an ideal church.  
We could wish that these good things could be said about all of our churches  
But there was something tragically lacking in the Ephesian Church, and Jesus  
didn't hesitate to call attention to it. There are four things that I  
would like ~~you~~ to see in these verses:

1. The Condemnation
2. The Command
3. The Consequences
4. The Conquering

*Now what was it? Not the*  
~~The~~ Condemnation

After commending the Ephesian Church, Jesus said in verse 4,  
"But I have this against you, that you have <sup>left</sup> ~~abandoned~~ the love you first  
had." Now this church was just as active as ever. It hadn't gone off into  
heresy. It hadn't fallen into sin. It hadn't brought disgrace on the  
name of Christ by immorality. But here is the thing that had happened.  
The divine spirit of love had evaporated <sup>what I think the</sup> ~~out~~ of people's hearts. There  
worship services, their Sunday School, their activities were nothing but  
an empty show.

*They were doing things not*  
*out of a sense of love for Christ - but for personal*  
*gain*

*or christians*

This can easily happen to any church. We can build our lovely buildings and make them worshipful and comfortable. We can sing the sweetest music and listen to the most Evangelist sermons. We can have everything just right, <sup>correct doctrine</sup> but if it is not all done in love for Christ, it means nothing.

*or* \* When a church is ~~first~~ started it is formed by people who have a love for Christ which makes them work and sweat and pray to get the church going. Then when things are running smoothly the danger of leaving Love out often arises.

It is a tragic thing when first love dies. What is first love like?

I would have you think of your first human love. When you first fell in love with the person you married. He <sup>Unit</sup> could think of anything but her, and she can't think of anything but him. He buys her presents that he can't afford. He thrills at the sound of her voice. The touch of her hand makes his heart sing. He can't do enough for her and she can't do enough for him.

*Man it is* Oh, ~~how~~ <sup>the</sup> thrilling ~~is~~ first love. But after they have been married awhile something happens. He doesn't have time to be with her, instead he wants to go fishing. Instead of longing to her her voice, he wants to listen to the ball game. Instead of desiring to be with her, he wants a night out with the boys.

*OK,* How does all of this apply to the Christian life? Again, I would have you think back to the time when you accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Remember when you first ask Christ to come into your heart? Everything was different. You were really a new person in Christ Jesus. The Bible was a different book. Like a bee gathering honey, you found precious treasures in every visit to God's Word. You said with the psalmist, "Thy Word is sweeter than honey to my mouth."

There is one thing which ~~always~~ <sup>ways</sup> strikes me each time I perform a service of Baptism. As the candidate is lowered into the water and then raised from the water there is a <sup>^</sup> glow <sup>on</sup> his face." It is the closest thing to the glory of God that I have ever experience. This is ~~what~~ I mean by that first love. A love which caused you to have hope in your heart, a new song on your lips. <sup>Why? because</sup> You ~~were~~ <sup>are</sup> a child of God.

But for many christians something tragic/~~tragic~~ happens. Indifference and coldness sets in - and unconsciously you lose your first love. Dust gathers on your Bible and life went out of your prayers. <sup>oh,</sup> You still go to church once in a while, but you find it harder and harder. You go out of a sense of duty or because you are forced to go. And your biggest dream is for the preacher to hurry and finish his sermon.

Now, What causes a Christian to lose his first love? Maybe it is through a desire for prosperity and success. A man said to me, "I'm taking a job which will require that I work on Sundays. But this will soon be over and I'll be back to church. In the meantime I'll live closer to God than ever." But the time came when he no longer had to work on Sunday - but he didn't come back to the Lord. He had lost his first love.

Maybe you have lost your first love in a desire to shine in the social circles of ~~Porterville~~ <sup>Porterville</sup>. I have seen this happen many times. Here would be a person, active and faithful to the Lord. Then <sup>he!</sup> she takes a position with P.T.A. (Not that is is wrong). Soon all of her time was given to this organization. She became so busy, she had no time for the Lord. She lost her first love and Christ received only the ragged ends of her life.

Maybe you lost your first love when you began to have bad feeling toward someone else. It is just impossible to hate anyone and have the peace that passeth all under standing in your heart. <sup>There was a time when</sup> car batteries were filled with acid. ~~and~~ <sup>you</sup> put <sup>them</sup> on shelves and left <sup>them</sup> to be recharged. Often the acid would spill over and eat the wooden shelves and fall and cause other problems. In like manner, our hatred and envy

and bad feelings toward others will eat away all of our spiritual happiness and power.

Now I don't know what it is that might have caused you to <sup>lose</sup> love your first love. There are many reason. The important thing is that if ~~you have~~ you have left your first love, <sup>then</sup> you return.

In the Bible Jesus is pictured as our Bridgegroom. We belong to Him. We make up His bride. His love never ~~weakens~~ - it is always fresh and full. But <sup>it grieves</sup> Him when our love cools off. My friend, if you have left your first love, Christ has something to say to you.

*and here it is in verse 5 -*

II. THE COMMAND -- (Read Verse 5a)

1. First, Jesus tells us to remember. This means that we are to remember how we loved Him when we first met him, and then we are to compare our present condition with conditions which existed then. Christians, today, need to examine themselves and see how far short they are falling from God's ideal for them.

Often people say to me, "I used to go to Chruch, but not now."

Some say, "I used to sing in the choir, but not now."

Others say, "I used to teach a Sunday School class, but not now."

Why ~~such~~ <sup>the</sup> a change? They have simply lost their first love.

What makes a Christian give of his time and money and talent in the service of Christ? Simple - he loves Jesus.

Two girls worked side by side in an office. One left for a months vacation. When she came back, <sup>she</sup> ~~so~~ met the other girl and said, "Mary, I see you have quite your job. And Mary replied, " Yes, I quite, and I am no longer working at all, I am married." Now, you and I know, she was busier <sup>as a married woman</sup> then ever, the hours were longer, ~~and~~ she didn't get any pay at the end of the week. But she didn't consider it work, she did it because ~~she~~ she loved someone. If we loved Jedus, we will want to serve him. *Witness, share, etc.*

2. Then Jesus Commands us to repent.

*christian*  
 Some ~~of you~~ are at church every Sunday or so. *Some* You few a pew. *Some* You are carrying on the outward form of religion, but you know where your heart is. But God calls you to turn from religion to a vital faith in Jesus Christ. A faith that has life in it - a faith that is alive. If you would just be honest with yourself, you would see your condition before God, you would recognize your need. *And* nothing in the world *would* could keep you from the repentance Christ calls upon you to exercise.

*Now, if you don't repent, notice the consequences, vs 5b says (Read)*  
~~III. THE CONSEQUENCES. Verse 5b. (Read)~~

*as well as a church*  
 Christ tells the people in the Ephesian church that if they do not repent, he will come and remove their lampstand. Jesus means that a church is a lighthouse, and if it loses its love for Christ, the light goes out and her usefulness goes out with it.

What is a home where love has died? It is nothing but a house. A beautiful house with expensive furnishings and every convenience doesn't make a home. Only love makes a home. It is the same way with the church. ~~Only/love/makes~~ A grand building and beautiful and expensive furnishings do not make a real church. *church* The love of Christ must be present if the church is to be anything more than a pile of stones and a list of names. *on a roll sheet*

The Ephesian church was active and patient and faithful. But it left its first love for Christ and the people of that church never repented. The light went out and Christ was not found in the midst of the people. The church died and soon passed out of existence. *history tells us it* The church where Paul worked for over three years - died and passed into the pages of history when it left its first love and her people would not repent.

~~/A/church/can/be/orthodox/in/~~ As it was with that church, so it can be with the individual christian. He can be <sup>evangelical</sup> orthodox in his beliefs, pure in his conduct, and can go through all the forms of religion. But if he leaves his first love for Christ, his light goes out. No longer does he enjoy his faith, no longer does he shine for Jesus in the place where he works. No longer does his testimony count for God. His light has gone out.

But don't stop <sup>here, notice this response</sup>  
~~IV. THE CONCLUDING~~ verse 7 (Revelation)

Jesus said that those who conquered, those who repented and turned **back** to their first love could eat of the tree of life in paradise. Now what did He mean? Laying aside all thrological implications, I will just say <sup>simply</sup> that paradise means the sum total of all the good things that God has for you and me, with Christ in the center. If we return to our first love, we can partake of everything good that God has **for us**, here, in this life and in life eternal. [But I would like to ask you if you have any appetite for this spiritual food? When a baby is born **no one** has to teach him **how** to eat? He knows that his mouth has been made to receive the sustenance that **will** satisfy his inner hunger. So the baby puts anything he sees in his mouth: **seap**, money, toys, carpet tacks, bugs, anything. And <sup>that should be</sup> it is ture of the Christian. If you have been born again **by** the Spirit of God, if you have returned to your first love, you will, <sup>then</sup> have an appetite for spiritual food. No one will have to <sup>get</sup> you to come to church or read your Bible or pray or witness. You will hunger for everything that **God** has for you and you will go after it.

CONCLUSION.

9 A member of Dr. Phillips Brooks' church came and asked that his name be dropped from the membership. Dr Brooks told him that this was a serious step, but the man was insistent. Just then a boy came to the door, bringing a note for the pastor. Dr. Books read the note and then said to the man, "This is a note from a woman who is very sick and needs <sup>spiritual</sup> help. I am going out to conduct a funeral, would you go with this boy and supply the <sup>spiritual</sup> needs of this sick person, and then I will talk with you about removing your name from the church roll." The man agreed and followed the boy to a home, where he found a sick and half-blind woman in bed. "Dr. Brooks," she said, "I am so glad that you have come. You are God's man. I need food and medicine, but first I want you to please pray for me."

This man hadn't prayed in years, but he dropped upon his knees and prayed first for himself and then for the woman. She knew by his voice that he was not Dr. Brooks. She did not know who he was, but as he prayed the fires of devotion began to burn again in his own heart. When he ended the prayer, he said, "My dear woman, I am not Dr. Brooks. I am the most worthless Christian in Boston. Dr. Brooks is conducting a funeral and he sent me to <sup>pray with</sup> help you. But how you have helped me." ~~What do you need?"~~

The man went out and brought back everything that the woman needed. With a heart singing with joy he went back to Dr. Brooks and said, "Pastor, I don't want my name dropped from the roll. I ~~have~~ found my first love, and I am all right now. "

Can you say that <sup>tonight</sup> ~~today~~, my friend? Is it all right with you? Is it well with your soul? Christian, you are not right unless you are living faithfully for Christ. Sinner, you will never be right until you give your heart to Jesus. Why not let this be your hour of decision?

Let us close in Prayer