

WHEN A CHURCH LOSES ITS LOVE FOR JESUS Revelation 2:1-7

(Main Idea of the Text)

Jesus was pleased with the obedience of the church of Ephesus yet disappointed they did not love Him as they should have.

(Main Idea of this Study)

Jesus is pleased with our obedience, but He is jealous for our devotion that should lead to good works.

I. Christ is characterized by His protection (1).

- *To the angel of the church*-The "angel" who was the primary recipient of this letter was probably the human representative of the Ephesian church who carried this letter, along with the rest of Revelation, to the church at Ephesus.
- *Ephesus*-see video.
- *He who holds the seven stars in His right hand*-present tense. Jesus is in firm possession of this church. This is a description of Jesus taken from 1:16.
- *who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands*-present tense. Jesus is present in the church. He is up close and present. This metaphor is used in Genesis 3:8 as a symbol of God's presence with mankind

II. The Church is commended for its Purity (2-3, 6).

A. Jesus is pleased with our good deeds (2).

- *I know your works*-They had toiled to the point of exhaustion. Ephesians 2:10: For we are His workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works**, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.
- *your labor*-Can be translated, "trouble, toils." For over 40 years, since its founding, this church had remained faithful to the Word and the Lord.
- *your patience*-steadfastness. This term implies a voluntary, active, steadfast endurance. This is a major theme of the book (cf. 1:9; 2:2, 3, 19; 3:10; 13:10; 14:12).
- *you cannot bear those who are evil*-They could not endure those who are evil.

B. Jesus is pleased with our faithful dedication (3).

- *you have persevered*-bore, took up.
- *have patience*-bear up under.
- *and have labored for My name's sake*-They had worked hard for Jesus.
- *have not become weary*-They may have been weary but not weary of the work.

C. Jesus is pleased with our sound doctrine (2, 6).

- *have tested those who say they are apostles*-This Greek term meant to test with either good but mostly bad intentions.
- *you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans*- We know little of the "Nicolaitans," who may have been followers of someone named "Nicolas," perhaps the proselyte from Antioch who may have been one of "the Seven" (cf. Acts 6:5). They are only mentioned twice in the Bible (Revelation 2:6, 15). From what is said by John, it seems idolatry and immorality were at the root of their practices.

The word "Nicolaitans" is a transliteration of two Greek words that mean "to conquer" and "people." Consequently, Nicolaitanism has come down through history as typifying any system that seeks to dominate rather than serve people.

- *which I also hate*-Present active indicative; on-going hatred. There are some things that God hates. God hates heresy. To hate everything that God hates is right.

He approved of the good works ("deeds") of these believers—their "toil" (labor to the point of exhaustion) in His service, patient endurance ("perseverance") of circumstances under affliction, and discipline of ("cannot tolerate ... put to the test") "evil men" and "false" teachers.

III. The Church is criticized for its passion (4).

A. Jesus is honest with His people.

- *Nevertheless I have this against you*-Blatant honesty from Jesus. "There is an area of your life where I am in opposition. There is an area that disappoints and offends Me."

B. Jesus is jealous for His people.

- *that you have left your first love*-Because the emphasis in all these letters on the congregations' allegiance to Jesus Christ, seems to favor the view that love for Him is in view here. Remember the FIRST and greatest commandment. Matthew 22:37 Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."

It is interesting that Paul mentioned love for the Lord in his benediction in his letter to the Ephesians: "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love incorruptible" (Eph. 6:24). Unfortunately, the love of the Ephesians had become corrupted since Paul wrote that letter. They had "left" (quit, forsaken) their first love. Labor is no substitute for love.

IV. **The Church is corrected with a plan (5).**

The plan was a three step process: remember, repent, return.

A. **Remember from where you have fallen.**

- *Remember therefore from where you have fallen*-“Remember” is a present imperative, “keep on remembering.” Remember how they once felt about Jesus. Memory can be a powerful force in effecting a return to a more satisfying relationship. “Have fallen” is a perfect active indicative. Leaving their “first love” had become a settled condition of neglect.

B. **Repent of your sin.**

- *repent*-aorist active imperative. Change your attitude which results in a change of actions.
2 Corinthians 7:10: For **godly sorrow produces repentance** leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

C. **Return to where you first fell in love.**

- *do the first works*-aorist active imperative. Live like you did when you first came to know Christ. To rekindle "first love" there needs to be a return to "first works," because there is an intimate relationship between love and good works 1 John 5:2: By this we know that we love the children of God, **when we love God and keep His commandments.**
- *I will come to you quickly*-This is a common theme in this book; Christ is coming soon. Jesus is coming soon it may be morning, night or noon!
- *and remove your lampstand*-Judgment! Christ has no problem removing this church from His circle of churches.
- *unless you repent*-reassurance that if they repented they would be restored.

V. **The Church is challenged with a promise (7).**

A. **We can conquer by perseverance.**

- *He who has an ear*-An invitation preceded the promise, as in all the letters to follow (cf. 1:3). Jesus was the only person to issue this invitation in Scripture. The Gospels also record Him doing so seven times (Matt. 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mark 4:9, 23; Luke 8:8; 14:35).
- *let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches*- Spiritual truth must be responded to by mind and hand. This is similar to the Hebrew term *shema*, “hear so as to do.”

B. **We will celebrate in paradise.**

- *To him who overcomes*-“*Nikao*” from where we get the word Nike. The verb is used 26 times in the NT, 21 are in the writings of John, 15 are in Revelation alone. It probably refers to all Christians (cf. vv. 2-3, 10c,

13, 19, 25; 3:3, 8, 10; 1 John 5:4-5). The promises given to overcomers is found in all seven letters and in 21:7.

1 John 5:4-5: For **whatever is born of God overcomes the world**. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. **Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?**

- *I will give to eat from the tree of life*- There is a connection between the "tree of life" and man's rule over the earth. Adam in his unfallen state had access to this "tree," but when he fell, God kept him from it (Gen. 1:26-28; 3:22). In the future, believers will have access to it again (cf. 22:14). This promise suggests that overcomers will experience the fellowship with God that Adam and Eve enjoyed before the Fall. To eat of the Tree is to enjoy all that the life of the world to come has in store for redeemed humanity.
- Archaeological excavations in Ephesus revealed a large garden area in the temple of Artemis. This "tree shrine" was a special, holy place for the worship of Artemis. Evidence suggests it was the most sacred of all parts of the temple. John suggests that just as that tree of life was found in the midst of the initial paradise of Eden, so it has been somehow transplanted to "the paradise of God."
- *which is in the midst of the Paradise of God*- "Paradise" is a Persian loan word meaning "a walling around," hence resembling a kind of walled park or garden. It is only used four times in the NT (Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 12:4; Revelation 22:2). It is the place where the righteous go to with God.