

Revelation 2:1-2:7 - Don't Lose Your First Love

Pastor Chris Bove

Introduction - Jesus admonishes the church to remember their first love, repent, and return to those first deeds. Christians should confess and repent from self-idolatry and rekindle their love for Jesus by making Him first.

The Church Letters - Each of the seven church letters includes a greeting with an attribute of Jesus, commendation (all but one), correction (all but two), instructions/warnings, and a promise to overcomers. There are applications for the historic churches and a personal application to believers today (he who has ears to hear, let him hear).

Background on Ephesus - Ephesus was the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire, an important port city, a hub of transportation and highways, the home of Roman temples and cults, and it was influenced by sorcery and magic (Eph; Acts 19). Images and more background: <https://www.bibleplaces.com/ephesus/> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephesus> <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/markdroberts/series/ancient-ephesus-and-the-new-testament/>

v1 - Description of Jesus: Holds the stars and walks among the lampstands - Jesus holds the messengers (leaders or angels) of each church in His hand - they answer to Him (Jo 10:28-29). He walks among the churches (Mat 28:20).

v2-3, 6 - Commendation: Toiling, enduring patiently, not weary, and doctrinally sound - Jesus knows their works. This is comforting: there is nothing to hide from Him when coming to Him (Jer 17:10). Jesus commends them for their hard work, patient endurance (like John's; Phil 1:29; 3:10; 2 Tim 3:12), refusal to bear with those who are evil (Is 5:20; 1Co 5:9-11), testing and finding out the false teachers (2 Pet 2), not growing weary (Phil 2:13), and hating the deeds of those God also hates (the actions, not the people). The identity of the sect known as the Nicolaitans is uncertain.

v4 - Correction: Abandoned their first love - But they have left their *protos agape* - the love they had at first. Jesus' followers are to love God and love their neighbor (Mat 10:37; Mrk 12:29-34; 1Jo 2:15-16; Ja 4:4; Jo 15:10; Ez 6:8-10). They serve but lack a vibrant, loving, personal relationship with Jesus (1Co 13). The ones who enter the kingdom of God are those who do the will of God (Mat 7:21-23).

v5 - Instructions and warning: Remember, repent, return to first works - Jesus offers a remedy: remember from where they fell (Is 51:1-3, 7-8), repent (Deut 30:1-6, 15-20), and do the works they did at first (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37; 5:27-42; John 13:34-35; Rom 12:10). We need to continually recall the gospel to mind, confess our sins, repent/change our minds, put the old self to death, put on the new self, and pursue Jesus with our entire self (1Pe 3:18; Eph 4:17-24).

v7 - Promise: Eat of the Tree of Life in God's paradise - The Spirit says this to anyone who would listen. Those who overcome in Christ (Rev 12:11; 1Jo 5:1-5; Rev 21:6-8; Jo 16:33) will eat from the tree of life, which provides eternal life in God's paradise (Gen 3:22; Rev 22:2).

So what, now what? Jesus confronted this church for misordering their affections and living for something besides Him. The remedy is to remember their salvation and Savior, confess, and repent. We are challenged to respond in the same way today. There is now no condemnation in Christ (Rom 8:1): He aims to restore the joy of our salvation in Him that comes from pursuing Him with our whole self (Psa 51:12). Lord, kindle afresh in us the love we had for You at the first. Help us now to remember what you have done for us, and let that reignite the passion for You where it is lacking.

- Is the true measure of success visual? What is God most concerned with? How would we fare in His examination?
- What deeds does God want me to pursue again? What areas of Christian walk do I need to grow in?
- What does the Ephesian church do well that we can emulate? How do we test and find out false teachers?
- How does the church refuse to bear with those who are evil, yet show compassion to the lost?
- Read: Acts 19, Ephesians. How do these passages complement the message to this church?