

# A GOLDEN LAMPSTAND



## “Right but Wrong

*Revelation 2:1-7*

**Main Idea:** Jesus calls us to keep love for the Lord as the foundation for all we do for him!

### **The Lord knows the reality of our work for him and our endurance in his work (1-3).**

- *He knows when we work hard for him (2).*
- *He knows when we reject evil and false teaching (2).*
- *He knows when we endure hardship for his name's sake (3).*

The Lord started with the positive in the church in Ephesus. This was a church that lived in a pagan setting in the Roman Empire. It was a culture that was inundated with polytheism and immorality. Much like our culture today, it was an environment that was difficult for a Christian, filled with temptation as well as tribulation for those who desired to live godly lives. Yet in the midst of such an environment, the church in Ephesus was holding fast to sound doctrine. They were persevering in the teaching and preaching God's Word. They were enduring a sinful world without comprising or accepting sin. The church in Ephesus continued to reject those who did evil. They discerned and rejected those who were false teachers, and as a result, they hated and rejected those who taught things that led to disobedience and sin rather than to obedience and holiness. Taking stands like that in a culture like first century Rome won't come at no cost. There was a cost, and the church in Ephesus even endured those costs – hardships – for the sake of the name of Jesus Christ. In all of this, Jesus wanted his church to know that he knew! He knew the reality of their work for him and their endurance in his work.

1. How does it encourage you to know that the Lord knows how we work for him? Be specific, and share some practical ways that this truth encourages you.
2. How does it challenge you to know that the Lord knows how we work for him? Be specific, and share at least one way that you're challenged by this truth.
3. Why is rejecting evil and false teaching important? It was something that the Lord praised, so why was that? What are the dangers of these things if the church grows complacent and accepting of evil and false teaching?
4. Have you endured hardship for the sake of Christ? If so, how? Pray for each other.

### **The Lord's against just doing the right things for the wrong reasons (4).**

- *God's desire is that our love for him will motivate all we do for him!*

While there was much to praise in the church in Ephesus, there was also a potentially fatal flaw in the heart of the church. It wasn't some heresy that they were accepting. It wasn't a compromise with sin or a slip into immorality. It was simply a matter of love! The church in Ephesus had abandoned the love they had at first. In other words, when the church in Ephesus began, they had a great love for the Lord, which motivated and moved them in their worship and service to the Lord. However, as time passed, their love had waned. At some point, their love had dissolved to the point that the Lord said that they had abandoned that

love! So while they were doctrinally sound and were defenders of the faith – so to speak – they were doing all the right things for the wrong reasons. They weren't teaching and protecting out of a love for Jesus that led them to love others. Perhaps they were doing it out of tradition, obligation, sinful pride, or even a selfish desire to be seen as "right." Whatever their motivation for doing the right things was, their motivation wasn't their first love for Jesus. God's desire was that their love for him would motivate all they did for him!

1. Think back to when you first became a believer. Why did you love the Lord at that moment in your life? What had he done for you? Why did you want to worship with your church and serve the Lord?
2. Consider your love for the Lord now. Has it changed from when you first became a believer? If so, is it stronger or has it waned? Why do you do the things you do in worship and service to the Lord today? Is it out of your love for Jesus?
3. Pray for the Lord to protect and perhaps reignite our love for him!

**The Lord calls us to make our love for Jesus the heart of our work for him (5-7).**

- *Love for Jesus is a matter of life or death for a church (5b).*
- *Our eternal reward is motivation to continue in the conquering love of Christ (7).*

God's call to a doctrinally sound church was to "repent!" They needed to turn from the sin of a lack of love, and turn back to their first love for Jesus. While not neglecting the good things that they were doing, they needed to ground the things that they were doing in the motivation of love, and the significance of God's call is seen in the consequences of failing to respond to his call. This was a matter of life or death for the church in Ephesus! As Christ is the light of the world, the church was called to be the light of the world. Individual believers were called to be the light of the world. The lampstand represented that collective call for the believers of a church to be light for Jesus Christ! Without love, their lampstand was at risk of being put out. Today, nothing has changed. The Lord deserves that his church be faithful to do the right things in their service to him, but he also demands that his church do those things out of a deep and submitted love for him. The risk of disobedience is serious, but the reward of obedience is too! For those who conquer – who continue in their faith through repentance and love for the Lord – their reward is eternal!

1. Why is the motivation for what we do as important as the things we actually do?
2. Why was Ephesus at risk of having their church lampstand put out if they didn't renew their love for the Lord?
3. Do you need to repent of this very thing in your life? Are you doing what you do out of tradition, obligation, or some selfish motivation rather than out of your love for Jesus? If so, confess and repent right now.
4. How does God's promise of eternal life bring strength and encouragement to you today? How does it grow your love for Jesus?