

Have You Lost Your First Love

***Sometimes I feel I'm pulled in so many wrong directions
Sometimes I feel the world seducing my affections
It's not that I don't know the way it's just a heart that's prone to stray
But with my weaknesses admitted You will keep all that I've committed
So I commit my heart to you, my first love***

***First love, first love, my soul longs after you
First love, my first love, I want my heart to stay so true
Because you first loved me, Jesus, you will always be
You will always be, my first love***

(Lyrics from the Song "First Love" by Petra)

People are passionate about their love of sports teams, music artists, activities, etc. If you have ever been with someone who has recently fallen in love, every other word out of the person's mouth is about that new relationship. With enthusiasm, the individual describes every detail, sometimes again and again! That's a wonderful picture of how passionate God wants us to be about Him. In **Revelation 2:1-7**, Jesus is writing to the church in Ephesus and He commends them for their good deeds, hard work, perseverance, enduring hardships in His name, and not growing weary. And then there comes a warning: ***"Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you don't repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches."***

Ephesus was situated in what we know today as Turkey. It wasn't the capital city (Pergamum), but it was by far the wealthiest and the greatest city in all Asia. It was a major center for trade, travel, culture, religion and business. The Apostle Paul paid a visit there in about AD 53. You can read about it in Acts 19. His ministry was so successful that it practically turned the city upside-down. But in the very heart of that city he started a church that was filled with believers who were active, who were loyal, and who were fervent in their faith. Their church calendar might have been full of different activities such as prayer meetings, Bible studies, outreach events, kids' and youth ministries, senior adult ministry, communion, and worship services. Jesus said to them, *"I know about your hard work. I can see what you are doing and I appreciate your faithful service!"* This was an active church.

After Jesus commends them He then looks right into their eyes and to the depths of their very soul and He utters words which must have cut them to the core: ***"Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love."*** What happened? What had gone wrong? Now I don't imagine that their forsaking their first love happened in one giant step. It wasn't that one day they got up and decided not to love God any more. It was a gradual thing. For a while their love for God was so great and so infectious that people were drawn into their fellowship. Great sermons were preached, and wonderful things were happening. And they were known far and wide for their steadfast faithfulness, even in the face of persecution. But then they got so consumed with activity, so busy doing things for Jesus, that they stopped spending time with Him, both personally and corporately. Eventually all that was left was people going through the motions.

I have been there! You can almost hear the pain in Jesus' voice as He utters the words – *"You have lost your first love. You just don't love me anymore. Oh, how I long that you would love me as you did in those first days."*

Love...you see, that's the starting point of the Christian life. Our Christian life begins when we fall in love with Jesus and on our journey at some point – and this may have happened to some of you – other things become more important, other things consume your time, and other things compete for your attention. It might be work related, might be family related, might even be church related – but other things keep you so busy that you no longer have time to spend in the presence of God – and you've lost your first love. Your love for him has grown cold and weary. You know longer love Jesus or other people in the fellowship as you did at first.

You see it doesn't matter how established your beliefs are. It doesn't matter how blameless your character is. It doesn't matter how good you are at persevering under trial. It doesn't even matter how good and professional our church services are. What does matter – what really matters – is whether you are still in love with Jesus Christ as you were on the day when you first found Him. Let us return to our first Love, Jesus Christ!

***"When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads,
because your redemption is drawing near."*** (Luke 21:28)

Bro. Andrew