

Remember Your First Love

Eric Hamilton

The book of Revelation opens with a breathtaking vision of the glorified Jesus, walking among seven golden lampstands, holding seven stars in His hand. These lampstands represent seven churches in Asia Minor, and Jesus dictates specific letters to each one. The first letter goes to the church in Ephesus, a congregation that, on the surface, appears to have everything right.

Jesus begins with strong commendation. “I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance,” he says in [Revelation 2:2-3](#). “And how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary.” From a human perspective, we would call this an exemplary church. Strong doctrine, faithful perseverance, tireless service, and intolerance for falsehood. These are qualities every congregation and every individual Christian should pursue.

Scripture repeatedly calls believers to similar standards. Paul urges steadfast, immovable labor in [1 Corinthians 15:58](#). In [Romans 12:9](#) we’re commanded to “*abhor what is evil*.” Jesus warns about false prophets in [Matthew 7:15-16](#). Endurance through suffering and refusal to grow weary in doing good are marks of genuine faith. The Ephesian church excels in all these areas. Jesus openly acknowledges their good works.

Yet the letter takes a startling turn. In verse 4, Jesus says, “*But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first*.” How can this be? A church that does so many things correctly, that endures persecution without growing weary, has somehow lost its first love.

Jesus should be the first and only love of the church. We love him “*because he first loved us*,” as [1 John 4:19](#) declares. Throughout Scripture, the relationship between Christ and his church is portrayed as a marriage. Paul writes in [Ephesians 5:25-27](#) that Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, to present her as a radiant bride without spot or blemish.

The Ephesian church finds itself in a tragic position: still carrying out the duties of the relationship while the love has faded. Many of us have sadly seen marriages reach this point. Couples continue to live together, fulfill responsibilities, attend events side by side, yet affection, passion, and delight in one another have quietly slipped away. They go through the motions out of habit or obligation rather than joy. Jesus looks at Ephesus and, in essence, says the same thing an estranged spouse might: the love is no longer there.

Love stands at the center of God’s commands. When asked about the greatest commandment, Jesus replied, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind*” ([Matthew 22:37-38](#)). Everything else flows from this. Paul says, “*If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels... have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove*

mountains, but have not love, I am nothing” ([1 Corinthians 13:1-2](#)). External obedience, even great deeds without heartfelt love misses the mark.

Jesus offers a clear path forward in [Revelation 2:5](#). “*Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first*.” First, remember. Reflect on the height from which you have fallen. Think back to the early days of your faith, when you would do anything for Jesus out of overflowing gratitude and affection. In a marriage, couples often recall their early years together, when small acts of kindness came naturally because love compelled them.

The danger lies in gradual drifting. [Hebrews 2:1](#) warns us to “*pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it*.” Drifting happens slowly and imperceptibly. Because the Ephesians remain active in ministry, they likely do not realize how far they have moved. The same can happen to us. We stay busy with church activities, Bible studies, and service projects, yet somehow the passion cools without us noticing.

Jesus next calls them to repent, to change direction, and to return to the deeds they did at first. Notice that he does not ask them to invent new activities. The issue is not the actions themselves but the attitude behind them. The early deeds flowed from love, zeal, and joy. Those same deeds, performed now out of mere duty, no longer please him in the same way.

The warning grows severe. If they do not repent, Jesus will remove their lampstand from its place ([Revelation 2:5b](#)). A church that persists in loveless practice faces the real possibility of losing its vital connection to Christ. External correctness alone cannot sustain a living relationship any more than a marriage can survive on routine without affection.

Jesus closes the commendation on a positive note in verse 6, praising them for hating the works of the Nicolaitans, which he also hates. They hold firmly to truth. Yet even this strong stance on doctrine does not offset their critical failure in love.

The message to Ephesus speaks directly to us today. In our personal walk with Christ and in our churches, we must examine our hearts. Are we simply going through the motions? Do we serve merely out of obligation? Have we left our first love, Jesus Christ, even while maintaining impressive activity?

Jesus invites us to remember, repent, and return. Remember the joy of your salvation and the wonder of his grace. Repent of complacency and coldness. Return to the practices that flowed from love: eager prayer, joyful worship, generous service, and wholehearted devotion. Our Savior has not changed. His love remains steadfast and passionate. If the fire has dimmed in our hearts, the answer lies not in trying harder but in returning to him, the true source of love. Only then will our works once again spring from the overflow of a heart captivated by Jesus, our first and greatest love.



Message from Gerry Dixon

Stanten,

Thank you for your weekly bulletin and sermon links. I look forward to them during our return from early service at our church.

Just before Christmas, I received a cardio catheter after many other inconclusive test because of my symptoms of reduced energy, endurance and stamina. They found three blocked coronary arteries. Fortunately, my son's father-in-law, Dr. Tom Rice is a retired award winning surgeon from Cleveland Clinic and his student agreed to perform the surgery. As a matter of fact, Tom had his by-pass surgery done by his student as well.

I hope to have my open heart triple bypass surgery early in January and request to be added to your prayer list.

Thank you,
Gerry Dixon



We invite you to stay for our Weekly Fellowship Lunch & Afternoon Devotional!

We hope you'll stay and eat, fellowship and worship with us immediately following morning services.

For your calendar.....

Weekly Fellowship Luncheon	Sunday – 12:00 Noon
Singing Night	January 7
Ladies Bible Study	January 9 – 10:00 AM