

Ephesus: The Loveless Church Revelation 2:1-7

Intro: By the end of a week - I can easily have 500 emails in my in box. - If I get behind - overwhelming.

A)But the email platform I use divides my emails into 3 categories - People / newsletters or updates and notifications

B)Now the People categories get my full attention and priority.

C)The other two categories - I breeze through rather quickly at the end of a day or week -

1)Delete 90% of them

But when it comes to the People folder - there are certain emails that come from someone that garners my immediate attention.

A)I click open with an anticipation - What do they want -

B)or maybe they are responding to an email I sent them- Eager to open

C)Well imagine getting an Email from Jesus? How cool would that be?

D)Well that is exactly what happened to seven churches in the first century.

1)They received not an email from Jesus but a letter - addressed to their pastor and for their church.

E)Imagine what that must have been like to gather around - and listen to what Jesus had to say about your church.

1)Excited or Scared? - Both?

Many people want to skip these letters.

A)They want to get to the "good stuff" - Prophetic stuff - the end times stuff

B)That is what they have questions about.

1)To them it is Like choosing between movies - Drama vs and Action film - give me the Action Sci-Fi flick

C)They want to learn about all the symbols and signs in Revelation -

1)want insight into the last days and the end of the world - skip the churches

D)But that is the wrong attitude to have. - These letters are radically important.

Although these letters were written to seven literal and specific churches - In Asia minor

A)These letters have so much to say to the church today and to our lives individually.

B)Some of the same problems we are seeing in our society today -

1)these Christians were experiencing back then

C)Some of the same challenges we see in the church as a whole in our day -

1)these were the same challenges they were dealing with too.

D)Revelation 2-3 are like a Spiritual heart check for those who are following Jesus.

1)And as we see things that were wrong with these churches/

2)YOU might also see things that are wrong in you - need to be addressed

This is what we find in studying about these seven churches - 5 of the seven had problems- not healthy.

A)Only 2 were pictures of health

B)Of the five problem churches - 3 of them had a heart problem -

1)the heart was at the center of their issues

C)The other two problem churches had a compromise problem

D)The Beautiful thing for these churches and for us - Although five have problems -

1)Jesus does abandon them -

E)He comes to them - he is wanting to help them get right

Our approach to looking at the churches

A)Since we are combining our Sunday/ Wednesday Studies -

B)Here is how we are going to approach our look at these 7 churches

Beginning today and over the next 3 Sundays -

A)We are going to look at the churches that had a heart problem

**B)Sundays: The churches with a Heart Problem:
1)Ephesus- 6/9 / Sardis- 6/16 / Laodicea- 6/23**

C)Wednesdays: The two churches with a Compromise problem

1)Pergamos 6/12- Compromised Doctrinally / Thyatira / 6/19- Tolerated Sexual Immorality

D)Then we will finish up by looking at the two Healthy Churches that didn't have problems

1)Smyrna on 6/26 and Philadelphia on 6/30

Today Ephesus - The Loveless Church V.1-7

“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, ‘These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: 2 “I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; 3 and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary. 4 Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent. 6 But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”

Outline for today: 5 Main points

Revelation- Jesus identifies himself

Recognition - Jesus praises some churches for being on the right track.

Rebuke - Jesus brings forth a direct and sobering truth for the church addressing their heart problem

Remedy - Jesus gives a remedy of how to bring about change.

Ramifications – Jesus presents rewards for their faithfulness and repentance, or some very painful consequences for lack of repentance and obedience.

“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write,

A)Angel is Messenger - Pastor

B)Ephesus the City Ephesus was one of the premier cities in the Roman province of Asia.

1)It was a fabulous city. Even the ruins....- see next year FSOP Cruise

C)Big city - A metropolis, like a Los Angeles or a New York in their time

It was a major trading outpost - A Business Center - Silicon Valley of its day

A)There was a large Medical School there

A huge 65,000 seat arena

B)It was also a Religious city that was home to temples of many pagan deities

C)One of the most famous was the majestic temple to the fertility goddess Diana of the Ephesians.

1)Her temple was one of the Seven Wonders of the World

B)But along with being the home of the fertility goddess came a lot of sexual immorality.

1)Prostitution was regularly encouraged as part of the worship services for the various gods.

C)That was the city of Ephesus - but God planted a church there

1)that made a powerful impact upon that city and the rest of Asia minor

D)The Church in Ephesus became a headquarters for evangelism in Asia Minor

1)It was sort of like the launching pad of evangelism. so that all of Asia heard the Word of the Lord.

E)But now Jesus is writing to the church about 43 years after it had started. - What would he say to it?

1)Our church is about 43 yrs old - 2 years CC TC

The Revelation of Jesus V.1 - These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:

A)Here Jesus draws from the vision that He gave John of himself in Chapter 1

B)Noted last Sunday and this past Wednesday night - the Stars are the pastors or leaders of the churches

1)The Lampstands are the churches - light bearers

C)Jesus is walking in the midst of the churches - holding the leaders in his hand

1)He is there - He is for them - loves them - Loves them enough to address their issues.

The Recognition: - Report Card

2 "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; 3 and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.

Jesus tells us 4 things about this church that he KNEW - that blessed him

A)They were a serving church- There was much activity going on, many programs and ministries

B)Works is translated as "to take up in one's hands."

1)In other words, the church in Ephesus took ownership of the ministry.

C)They wanted to be hands-on in God's kingdom.

1)They were very busy using their hands and resources to minister for Jesus.

D)Not a lot of pew potatoes in this church - Very Active

E)Lots of ministry going on- Ministering to each other and to their city -

1)Evangelizing the lost - caring for the needy - outcast - marginalized

They were a Sacrificing Church

**A)I know your works, your labor,
Labor = Working to the Point of EXHAUSTION**

B)They were busy people, continually working, and our

C)Let me say that this is one of the marks of a healthy church. An unhealthy church is ingrown.

1)They're only concerned about what is going on within their own four walls

D)A healthy is outreach oriented.

1)It gets nourished in the things of God but it also looks to the world, as its mission field

I imagine this church visited the sick, taught the young, had seminars of all sorts;

A)They were a very Active in ministering to and sacrificing for their community church.

B)They labored to the point of exhaustion: Jesus commends them for this

C)It is commendable for the believer to take up the mission of Christ in their hands

1)and labor at it with all their might.

There are few things worth your time, effort, labor, and resources,

A)But the work of Christ is at the top of the list.

B)Many people wear themselves out building their own kingdoms or fortunes.

It's been said that we are a culture that has mastered working at our play and playing at our work.

C)Too be Rich - Goal - Young people today

1))Farmer - This night your soul is required of you and you are not rich toward God!

D)Being active in the things of the Kingdom is what makes us Rich toward God - treasures in heaven.

E)So they were a Serving Church, a Sacrificing Church -

They were a steadfast church- your patience

A)The word "patience" is "hupomone" in Greek, and it means "to bear up under a load.

B)It could also mean to persevere under difficult circumstances - speaks of an unswerving constancy

1)or a steady determination

C)The persecution coming from Rome was the worst it had ever been-

There was a real anti-Jesus Vibe in Ephesus

A)Started back when Paul was there ACTS 19 - remember the demon possessed slave girl got saved in Philippi Acts 16

B)There were these guys there that made little idols of the goddess Diana -

1)and this girl made them money - fortune telling

C)But then she gets delivered from the Demon - gets saved -

1)and the idol makers realized business was going to get hurt -

D)They follow Paul to Ephesus - Started a Riot - angry at Paul - these Christians

E)People chanted for 2 hrs straight - Great is Diana of the Ephesians

F)The Animosity against the Christians only grew over the years in the Roman empire - 100,000's martyred

1)These believers stood strong for Jesus and the truth

So this is a pretty good report card so far right? Straight A's

A)Serving church, Sacrificing church, Steadfast Church

B)They were a **Scripturally sound Church** - they were a church that was marked by a Doctrinal purity.

you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;

C)When they noticed evil or false teaching in their midst, they did not tolerate it, but they addressed it

D)And in verse 6 we learn of a particular group of false teachers they did not tolerate, The Nicolaitans

Who were the Nicolaitans?

A)There's conjecture as to who the Nicolaitans were.

B)Probably they were the followers of Nicolas of Antioch, who started his own little group

1)and basically, it is thought, took grace to an unscrupulous extreme.

C)In other words, live any way you want to, do anything you want to, because you're a believer.

1)You're under grace. - **You can sin it up!**

D)And a lot of people thought, 'I like this religion. This is my style of a religion.'

1)Very open, very tolerant! I can live any way I want.'

E)But notice Jesus said, 'I commend you that you hate their deeds. I also hate them.'

Please mark that in V.2 Jesus says, "**You cannot bear those who are evil.**"

A)And Notice that Jesus is **commending them**, not **condemning them** for hating the deeds and doctrine of the Nicolaitans

B)if Jesus were alive on planet earth today - He would be called politically incorrect.

1)Jesus would be CANCELED TODAY

C)This goes against the grain of what is popular and in our culture today

1)and what is becoming the popular mindset in the church

Sadly, many churches today boast about their tolerance of what God considers evil.

A)They call it love, compassion, and relevance, and they do it in the name of reaching people for Jesus.

B)Jesus had no such concept. - He called Sin- Sin - and called people to repent of it because -

1) it would bring ultimate destruction

C)Now the way Jesus called people to repent was very loving - but he still called them to repent

Years ago back east, a hospital known as Binghamton General Hospital had a sudden rash of infant deaths in the maternity ward

A)Upon investigation they found out that in the baby formula they were giving to the new born babies salt was substituted for sugar.

B)The formula looked the same. No one could tell the difference - The difference is what it does when it's ingested.

C)The same with teaching. If it's not truth eventually it can infect and it can destroy.

So He's commending them: 'Straight A's.'

A)You work hard, you're energetic, you labor, you persevere under persecution,

B)You can discern error from truth. Straight A's.'

C)This sounds like an amazing church - I want to go to a church like that
Not so fast

THE REBUKE 4 Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

A)Not lost - but left = abandoned their first love

B)Another translation puts it this way: 'You no longer love Me like you did at first.'

C)What does it mean to Leave your First Love –

D)It is when the Lord & the things of the Lord are no longer your first passion .

1)Activity replaced Affection / Programs replaced Passion / Duty replaced Devotion -

E)There is a heart change that impacts the way you approach things

There is the illustration of the different seasons of marriage and the way that a husband responds to his wife when she shows signs of being sick

Year one: The wife coughs or sneezes - the husband says - babe - I am worried about you take you to the - ER?

Year two: The wife coughs and sneezes - Honey - that doesn't sound good let me call the doctor and make you an appointment B4 it gets too bad

Years 3-4: Wife coughs and sneezes “maybe you ought to lie down, I will make you some food, do we have any soup around here?”

Years 5-6: The wife coughs and sneezes - you look terrible - you should take some Nyquil and go to bed.

Years 7-8: The wife coughs and sneezes - the husband says - **Can you go into the other room - I can't hear the TV.**

What is interesting about the picture being painted with the Church of Ephesus is they are doing all the right things

A)But the motivation is wrong - their serving and standing and suffering is not motivated by Love!

B)Reminds me of that scene in the classic Movie Fiddler on the roof -

1)Tevye the husband says (Sings) to his wife, 'Do you love me?'

C)And she says, 'Do I love you?' Like what kind of a question is that?

1)She says, 'I make your bed, I cook your food, I clean your clothes.'

D)Tevye responds - 'I know, but do you love me?'

1)And she says the same thing. Look at all that I do for you.

E)Tevye is saying **I know, what do you do for me? But is it out of that love for me?**

Jesus is saying to the church of Ephesus - I see everything you are doing for me -

A)But the problem is it is not motivated by love for me.

B)How is it possible to serve God, and sacrifice for God, and suffer for God and not do it at out of love?

1)Happens all the time

C)Consider the different Motivations for serving Jesus other than Love.

1)**Guilt** - Everyone else is doing it - I should do it too.

2)I get so upset when ministries try to motivate people out of guilt - (if you are really godly)

D)**I want to be noticed or Recognized** -

1)Others see me serving they are going to think I am more spiritual - really cool

Here is another motivation that is not as bad as those two – but more subtle.

A)I realize I have a gift and I want to use it - I get blessed when I get to use my gift.

B)Now hear me - there is a Joy in getting to use your gift yes -

1)but that can't be your motivation for serving - self gratifying

C)And there will be times when you get to use your gift - but the outcome isn't great -

1)Preach no one gets saved!

D)When our Motivation for serving is based in a desire to use our gifts -

1)our Joy and satisfaction is rooted in what we are getting to do for Jesus

2)And what we are getting from Jesus - and not Jesus Himself

Listen you know that you have left your first love when your Why is broken

A)You're serving in the children's ministry. WHY?

You've become part of the pro-life protests. WHY?

B)You faithfully attend church every Sunday. WHY?

You serve food for the homeless. WHY?

C)You lead worship on the worship team. WHY? You teach Sunday school faithfully. WHY?

D)You lead a home group. WHY?

1)You give generously to the church and to missions. WHY?

LOVE is the right WHY.

A)Why do I do what I do? Because the love of Jesus compels me -

B)Because I'm rooted and grounded in love.

1)Because I love my brethren. Because I love the lost.

C)Because I love the truth. Because I love my neighbor. Because I love my spouse.

1)And all of those are rooted in the love of God.

D)This is why Paul prayed this way for the Church in Ephesus

"I pray that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and

depth and height-- to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." Ephesian 3:17

The Remedy:

5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works,

A)Three things - Remember, Repent, Return - do the first works,

B)Remember: from where you have fallen

C)Remember back to the time when you were most in love with Jesus

1)Remember back to the time when - Jesus love for you so captured your heart it motivated everything you did.

D)Because you were responding in LOVE to his love for you!

Here is where I want to caution though: This is more than about feelings.

A)You see feelings change with time. -

B)Many of us - extreme feelings first saved - Jesus saved me - forgave me - you cried tears of Joy.

C)First time you heard John 3:16 For God so loved the World that he gave - **heard someone say - you are a part of the world**

1)God loves me - Blown away.

But you have been walking with the Lord for 20 years now - and those verses or things don't bring you to tears anymore.

A)That doesn't mean that you have left your first love.

B)You might love Jesus even more now - but your love isn't as moved by emotion as it once was

1)Today it is rooted more in a greater depth of understanding of what that love is - So Vast -

C)Like Paul prayed you are growing in your understanding of the width and length and depth and height of that love

1)The more that you learn of that love the more that you are blown away and filled with gratitude -

2)Moves you to worship.

D)But the feelings are different - I think there comes a time in most Christians life -

1)their walk is less about feelings - More about - a depth of appreciation

Let me describe it this way: When I met Denise - I was 21 years old

A)My heart was filled with a lot of youthful emotion - I think she is the one

B)Love everything about her - beautiful - smart - passionate -gifted, caring, others centered on

C)Most of all she loved Jesus more than anything else in the world

We got married about a year after we met -

A)I still remember our wedding day - She walked down the Isle

B)Holding back tears - I can't believe this incredible woman is marrying me - Married up for sure

1)The feelings were HUGE and intense!!!

We will celebrate our 38th wedding anniversary next month

A)I can honestly say - I love her MORE today than I did the day we got married - really do.

B)But I can honestly say: My heart doesn't skip a beat when she walks into the room

1)like it did back then back then -

C)My emotions are more steady 38 year later - but THE love has deepened

See in 38 years I have come to really know her -

A)I didn't really know her when we first got married

B)Our love was based on limited knowledge and a lot of wonder and excitement - butterflies

C)But Now I know her - As she has grown and changed -

1)My understanding of her has grown and changed.

D)My appreciation of her has been magnified 100 fold!

So now when I sit down to write her a card for a special occasion

A)I start thinking about everything I love and admire about Denise - my heart is moved

B)Tears might start to flow- tears of gratitude

C)As I think about all that we have been through together -

1)the good times the tough times - the trials - the victories

D)Through it all ONE CONSTANT - she has been by my side

My point is my love for her is rooted way more in things that are less feelings oriented and even less Physical

A)It is a love that is rooted less in what I can get from her or what she has done or can do for me -

B)It is a love that simply enjoys being in her presence

C)A love that enjoys her company and this crazy wonderful life we have made together

Maybe some of you today need to get alone today or this week.

A)Sit somewhere and think about the years you have walked with Jesus

B)All that you have been through - good times - the bad times - the victories - the defeats

1)One Constant - He has always been there

C)Maybe you need to do a deep dive into a study of the cross - the atonement - Redemption - grace

1)Your heart recaptured - by the Love of Jesus and how it used to motivate everything that you did.

So It starts with Remembering Then Jesus says Repent

A)The word repent means to change your mind about the place where you are at.

B)You stop rationalizing your heart condition by saying - oh it is just a season

1)Or I have just been busy - That is why I haven't been spending time with Jesus - It will pass

C) If we are not careful season can become the norm

D) In truth - if we love something we will do everything to protect it

Listen if you have taken Him for granted - if you have taken your salvation for granted -

A) YOU need to ADMIT that - you need to own that

B) You admit to Jesus that your heart has drifted - that your why has gotten off track -

C) You ask him to forgive you.

D) Repentance starts with a recognition that there is a problem - that results in a course correction

#3 in the Remedy So You Remember/ You Repent / You Return - You do your first works again.

A) What does that mean exactly? - Do the first works again?

B) Now I have heard preachers say this to illustrate this verse -

1) Whatever you were doing when you felt the most in love with Jesus - go back....

C) I want to give a word of caution to that advice. - It is often rooted in feelings -

1) when you felt..... not reality

Example: The time where I felt the most in Love with Jesus was during my freshman year of College -

A) It was then that I was called into ministry - My desire for the word grew like never before

B) I went from spending 30 minutes in the word each day to spending 4 hours

1) I couldn't get enough - every free moment spent reading my Bible - involved in Church stuff

C) I was learning so many new things - But it was a time where I was single - going to college -

1) working part time - serving at church

D) I had a ton of free time - and very little responsibility - and a ton of energy

1) I was young and could get by on 5 hrs of sleep per day

That was my life at 19 - it is not my life at 60.

A) Today I have less energy, way more responsibility and a lot of less time.

B) So If I tried to go back and do what I was doing back then -to hopefully reproduce a feeling

1) I would burn out in a week and be very frustrated

C) I would Not be able to attain that - kind of pace

D) I would not be able to perform the things that I need to do for my Job - Pastor here -

1) Take care of My family - My house - hang with my grand kids

I would love to sit around all day and study the bible and read good books - Not a reality

A) That was my reality at 19 and it was a sweet time of growing in the Lord.

B) So going back and trying to reproduce something that you did at a previous time is not the answer.

1) Probably lead to guilt and frustration -

C) When Jesus says - Do the First works - I think the word First is the key

1) What he is saying is make Jesus your first priority again

D) The Quantity of time might look different by the Quality of heart can look the same!

E) The Remedy - Left first love: Remember/ Repent/ Return - Make pursuing Jesus your priority

1) Rewarder of those who diligently seek him!

The Ramifications

A) THE NEGATIVE- The punishment for not doing these steps is or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place— unless you repent.

B) In other words, the church's effectiveness to shine for God's kingdom, despite all of our work, 1) will be non-existent without love.

C) Our influence in the world around us will diminish to a flicker instead of burning like a strong flame.

D)The fire of love for Jesus must first burn in our hearts before it can illuminate the world around us.

The Ramifications

A)THE POSITIVE - To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

B)TO HE WHO OVERCOMES- To the one who stays faithful to Jesus until the end.

C)This is not something accomplished by our strength, will, or effort

1)but by clinging to the One who overcame.

D)The tree of life was in the garden of Eden -

1) it was the symbol of the abundant life God wanted his children to experience

E)Jesus promises to those who abide in Him

I have come to give you life and that more abundantly

A)Eternal life is a quality of life that we can experience right now - walking with Jesus

B)Living in an abiding relationship with Jesus

C)It will culminate in heaven - when we see him - discover that we are like him

D)All the barriers of this life are gone - Bliss and Blessing - being with Jesus

Heart Check today - How is your heart?