



Return My Love

Revelation 2:1-7

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: ²'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them *to be* false; ³and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. ⁴But I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. ⁵Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. ⁶Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'



Here is the BIG IDEA in this lesson:

If we love Christ, we will love one another.

Introduction:

This series ends where it really begins—with the life of and a love for the Master! Holiness has been defined as a hatred for what Christ hates and a love for what Christ loves; and Christ loves His Church (*Eph.5:25*). If we say that we love Christ, we will love His people; we will love one another (*1 John 4:20*). The root from which all of the "one anothers" grow is the life of Christ; and the spring from which they flow is the love of Christ.

The searching question that this text presses upon us is, "Does Jesus have the first love in your heart and in mine?" Does He have the passion, the fire, the glow, and the romance of those first affections of love that I gave Him when I first met Him? Or is the Savior, as He stands in the midst of those lampstands, with those eyes aflame with fire, saying to us, "*But I have this against you, that you have left your first love*" (v.4)?

Alexander Strauch speaks of a physical heart condition called cardiomyopathy that weakens the heart muscle so that the heart can no longer sufficiently pump blood. If left untreated, such a condition will cause a person to become weaker and weaker and eventually die.

There is a similar risk when a heart has become *deficient in love*. A cold heart becomes a *hard heart*, a heart resistant to change. As time passes, it becomes increasingly difficult to restore the warmth of Christian love. The progression must be stopped and the situation reversed before it is too late.⁹

The church at Ephesus was a church dying of a spiritual heart disease—and the Great Physician put *His finger on the problem, diagnosed the condition, and prescribed the remedy*. I want to remind you that our Lord addressed these words to a church that was *efficient in service, blameless in character, and orthodox in doctrine*, nevertheless, they were mysteriously lacking in love.

Here was a church that was unafraid to stand against and fight all sorts of doctrine and moral error. The Nicolaitans, with their compromising doctrine of worldliness, had been fought and repudiated in the church. The Lord Jesus commends them for this stand. He also commends them for their *blamelessness* and their toil (*which means to labor to the point of exhaustion and fatigue*). Yet, with all this, Jesus says, “...*I have this against you...*” What does this mean for us? What does this mean for you and for me?

It means that I can be efficient in my service, orthodox in my doctrine, and blameless in my character, yet all these great qualities will be nothing less than combustible material at the judgment seat of Christ—if I know nothing of a *passionate love for Jesus Christ*, and therefore, for His people and a lost world.

Before we enter the final study in this series, I must ask you again, **are you in love with the Savior?** Is your heart aglow with Him? Is your fellowship with Him sacred and sweet? Is the vision of the Savior clear? Does your heart throb with the desire of communion as you think of your Savior in your own heart? Are you in love with Jesus?

I’m not asking if you are efficient in service; I’m challenging your orthodoxy. I’m not questioning your character to find out whether it is above reproach and unimpeachable; I am asking a question that is preeminent in the mind of our Savior. *Are you in love with Jesus?*

As we come to this text and compare it with the letter to the church at Ephesus, we find that there are three points upon which to hang our thinking: first, *the Savior’s concern about a lost love*; second, *the subtle cause of a lost love*; and third, *the spiritual cure for a lost love*.

⁹ Alexander Strauch, *Love or Die*, pp.19-20



Lesson: Thinking Truth Through

A. THE SAVIOR'S CONCERN About a Lost Love (vv.1-3)

1. What is this first love? Read Jeremiah 2:1-2. (Cf. Hos.2:14-15)
2. Why is the Lord so concerned about a loss of the first love?
 - Because it is the real root of every spiritual problem. (John 21:1-17)
 - Because it is the first symptom of spiritual decline. (Luke 7:36-47)

B. THE SUBTLE CAUSE of a Lost Love (v.4)

1. Who is the cause of this heart trouble?
2. What happened?
3. What was the cause of this loss of the first love among them?
 - A failure to feed their love—through communion with Christ (Eph.3:17-19)
 - A failure to show their love—through exercise and obedience to Christ (Eph.4:2, 15)
 - A failure to guard their love—through vigilance and watchfulness (Eph.5:2-6)

C. THE CURE for a Lost Love (v.5a)

What is the cure for a loss of the first love?

1. **Remember—to remember** means *to recollect past feelings and actions*, but not in a passive sense. It is not sentimental daydreaming about “the good ol’ days,” with no intention to act. The present imperative command, “remember,” emphasizes an ongoing, continuous mental attitude of remembering. It requires making the effort to recall past joys, deeds, attitudes, and experiences in order to repeat them and act upon them.
2. **Repent—to repent** is another imperative, which reveals that *one must sense the need to return and restore the love he once possessed*. Remembering from *where* we have fallen leads us to repent. In true repentance, one accepts Christ’s evaluation of his condition, affirms that he is sinful and deserving of divine discipline (1 Cor.11:31-32), grieves over his displeasure to Christ (2 Cor.7:8-10), turns away from the sin, and returns to Christ by taking appropriate action.

3. **Return—*re-do*.** This does not mean to do more works, but, literally, “do the first works.” The Ephesians did something at first that they gradually minimized and, therefore, needed to restore.



Application: Making Truth Stick

- **Put yourself in the way of blessing.** Don't look for change to come like some kind of benign magic trick! You cannot expect revival without repentance or renewal without humility and honesty.
- **Do a thorough job of repenting.** Don't get in a hurry to get it over with. Hasty repentance leads to shallow change and a lack of assurance. Let godly sorrow do its healing work. Allow the consciousness of sin to wound you. Without it, you will never develop a healthy fear of God. Half-hearted repentance only produces a half-dead condition.
- **Deliberately narrow your interests.** The Jack-of-all trades is the master of none. In the Christian life, we need to be specialists, not generalists.
- **Begin to witness.** Find something to do for God everyday. Refuse to rust out. Make yourself available for service to the elders, deacons, or ministry leaders.

Being a doer of the Word (2 Tim.3:16)

1. What did I learn (“teaching”)?
2. Where do I fall short (“reproof”)?
3. What do I need to do about it (“correction”)?
4. How can I make this a consistent part of my life (“training”)?

Answer Key

Lesson: Thinking Truth Through

A.

1. a following after Him, a devotion, and expressed love

B.

1. we are
2. we left

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