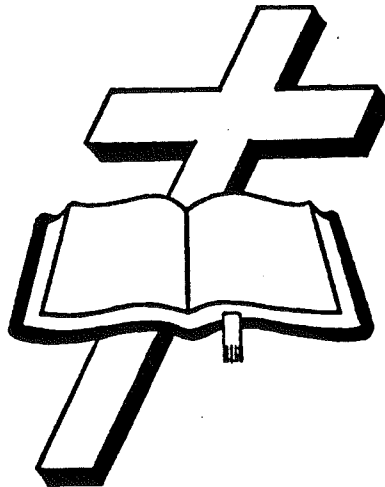


RESTORED TO FIRST LOVE

(How To Know When You've Left Your First Love)
Revelation 2:1-7



“I KNOW THY WORK”

- ◆ A Commendation
- ◆ A Correction
- ◆ A Calling

“Thou hast left thy first love” (Revelation 2:4)

Bill Kirk

“A LETTER TO EPHESUS”

Text: Revelation 2:1-7
Subject: “Restored To Your First Love”

Introduction To Revelation

- ◆ The Book of Revelation is a postcard from Jesus (a letter from the Heart of God to your heart and mine).
- ◆ It is a 22 chapter letter that speaks as much today as the day it was given.

Question: What is the Revelation of Jesus Christ?

Answer: The word “Revelation” means “to unveil”.

- ◆ It means “to uncover”, “to reveal” and “to manifest”.
- ◆ Revelation is an open book that reveals God’s plan for and me.
- ◆ It is a promise to every person (without exception) who will do 3 things in chapter 1:3)

“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand”.

Question: Who is it that God will bless in revelation?

Answer: Those who read it, hear it and keep it!

Question: What is in the Book of Revelation?

Answer: In chapter 1, John’s vision of Jesus exalted.

In chapters 2 -3, The messages to the seven churches. (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea).

In chapters 4 -5, The throne room in heaven.

In chapters 6 -19, The tribulation on earth.

In chapter 20, The kingdom of Jesus.

In chapters 21-22, The new heaven and earth.

Question: Who wrote the book of Revelation?

Answer: John the Apostle penned what the Holy Spirit gave him in A.D. 95 (after being banished to the isle of Patmos, a Roman prison colony).

Question: Why was it written?

Answer: To encourage, to counsel and to warn the seven local churches in Asia Minor:

(God’s people were in the midst of intense persecution, they needed an encouraging word)

Question: What does it have to do with me pastor?

Answer: The messages to the seven churches were given for personal application:

- ◆ It is a message of encouragement (and)
- ◆ It is a message of examination.

(It is a message that is practical and personal)

#1. Revelation is a **Christ - Centered** Book!

(Everything points to Jesus and His Word to us)

#2. Revelation is a **Revelant** Book!

(It reveals how Jesus knows exactly where we live)

#3. Revelation is a **Victorious** Book!

(Revealing how Jesus will return, defeat all evil, establish His reign and see His people as overcomers”)

(Overcomers are in all 7 churches)

- ◆ Revelation 2:7, “To him that **overcometh** will I give to eat of the tree of life”.
- ◆ Revelation 2:11, “He that **overcometh** shall not be hurt of the second death”.
- ◆ Revelation 2:17, “To him that **overcometh** will I give to eat of the hidden manna and will give him a white stone”.
- ◆ Revelation 2:26, “He that **overcometh** will have power over nations”.
- ◆ Revelation 3:5, “He that **overcometh** will be clothed in white raiment”.
- ◆ Revelation 3:12, “He that **overcometh** will I make a pillar in the temple of God”.
- ◆ Revelation 3:21, “To him that **overcometh** will I grant to sit with me in my throne”.

Question: How many of you want to be listed in the list of overcomers?

Question: How can we be one of the overcomers?

Answer: By taking heed to the one personal exhortation that concludes each of the 7 letters.

Question: What is the exhortation to each believer?

Answer: “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying”.

Question: How many of you have your ears open to Jesus?

Question: How many of you want to hear what the Spirit is saying to your heart?

Question: How many of you want to be both encouraged and examined these next 7 weeks by the Lord?

(Lets Make It Our Prayer Together)

“Lord, my ears are open to hear, and my will is open to obey”.

(Letter #1 Is To The Believers In Ephesus)

- ◆ In 2:1, Jesus said to John; “Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write”

Fact: The “Angel” in (v. 1) refers to the messenger (or pastor) of the local church.

Fact: The “Seven Stars” are the pastors of the seven churches.

Fact: It is a revelation here, that the Lord holds the minister responsible for what is taught in the church.

(Notice what Jesus is doing in v.1)

“...Who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks”.

Fact: The candlesticks are the churches.

Question: What is Jesus doing in 7 imperfect churches?

Answer: He is walking in the midst of all seven (which means),

- ◆ Jesus is walking up and down every pew and row of seats.
- ◆ He is present in this place because this (even though imperfect) is His church.

(And this church is Ephesus here)

- ◆ Ephesus was a busy metropolis city.
- ◆ There were 230 cities on the coast line of Asia Minor (Ephesus was the most important).
- ◆ Diana (the sex goddess) had a temple of worship.
- ◆ Commercialism and prostitution flourished everywhere.
- ◆ The disease of Ephesus was “If it feels good do it”.
- ◆ And in the midst of corruption, God had planted a church.
 1. Paul established the work in Ephesus.
 2. Paul, Timothy and John had pastored the church.
 3. And God wrought spectacular miracles to get the attention of the people.

4. Lives were converted and changed.
5. On one occasion, the believers built a bonfire to burn up their former pagan literature.

Question: What did Jesus say to the church at Ephesus?

Question: And what does Jesus say to us in His letter to the church? (3 words of power)

I. Word #1 Is "Commendation"

Question: What does Jesus commend believers for in Ephesus?

Question: What does He commend you for as well?

#1. Jesus commends "Servanthood"

(V. 2)...I know thy works and thy labor"

(V. 3)...For My Name's sake you have labored"

- ◆ The Greek words for "work" and "labor" here mean: "To labor to the point of weariness" (and) "to serve under personal loss"

(In Other Words)

- ◆ Believers in Ephesus labored and served with joy and without complaint.
- ◆ They were a part of the church for what they could give (not for what they could take)
- ◆ The believers here counted it a privilege to be inconvenienced for the sake of Jesus.

Question: Pastor, how does this encourage every worker at First Assembly of God?

Answer: The first 2 words of verse 2: "I know". ("I know" means:)

- ◆ Jesus is fully acquainted with everything you do.
- ◆ Jesus is completely aware of the energy you expend.
- ◆ Jesus is keeping account of your labor and service.
- ◆ Jesus "knows" everything there is to know about you (and what you do for Him).

#1. Jesus commends servanthood (and a servant is one who advances others at the expense of himself and cares less who gets the credit as long as God gets the glory).

#2. Jesus commends "Patience"

(V. 2) "... And thy patience" (V. 3) "...And hast patience"

- ◆ The word "patience" means "endurance under trial and test".
- ◆ It means "to stay focused and keep going when the going gets tough".
- ◆ It means the Ephesian believers persevered with steadfastness against opposition, intimidation, temptation and rejection!

(In Other Words)

- ◆ There will come a time when every believer will have to endure some grief for the blessing that will come to another. (Repeat)

(In Verse 3 "Hast Borne" Means:)

- ◆ The believers bore the criticism because they refused to cave in to compromise.
- ◆ "Hast Borne" means the Ephesians endured grief to maintain the faith of previous leaders.
- ◆ In (V. 3) "Have not fainted" means: The believers wanted God's approval instead of the peoples approval.

#3. Jesus commends "Conviction"

(V. 2) "...And how thou canst not bear them which are evil"

- ◆ Jesus looks out of heaven and says to the church "Great job, I'm proud of you"

(Why the commendation?)

- ◆ Because the believers refused to compromise with sin to be accepted by the crowd.

Question: Pastor, who are the evil ones in (v. 2)?

Answer: They are the ones described in (v. 6)

"But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate"

Question: Who were the Nicolaitans?

Answer: The Nicolaitans were a sect within the church:

- ◆ They were founded by Nicholas who was from Antioch.
- ◆ Nicholas taught that the actions of your body did not affect your spiritual man.
- ◆ The Nicolaitans believed and promoted that you could practice immorality (sin up a storm) and still be O.K. in your walk with God.
- ◆ Go out on the town, sin with whoever, and what you do with your body has no affect on your inward spiritual condition.
- ◆ And this group of church people attempted to seduce genuine believers to participate in their lifestyle.

Question: What did the Ephesian believers do?

Answer: (v. 2) "They refused to put up with and tolerate what the Pergamos believers tolerated.

(Chapter 2:15) The Pergamos believers accepted what Jesus and the Ephesians rejected.

(In Other Words)

The little Ephesian Assembly of God said:

- ◆ "We don't want numbers if they are unholy numbers (and)
- ◆ "We don't want growth at the expense of unholy growth".

(In Other Words)

- ◆ Ephesian believers "Stood firm" and maintained the standards of the Lord.
- ◆ Some church people went to the Temple of Diana.
- ◆ Some church people worshiped the sex goddess.
- ◆ Some church people patronized loose and sensual partners.
- ◆ Some church people refused to live holy outside of church.

(And these same compromisers)

- ◆ Rose up against the genuine believers who refused to bow to satanic pressure.

(And Jesus Said)

"Good job, I'll reward you accordingly"

#4. Jesus commends "Discernment"

(V. 2) "...And thou hast tried them which say they are Apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars"

- ◆ Paul had warned the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28-31, that false teachers would come into the church to detect and reject those whose doctrine is in error.
- ◆ Paul also taught the church to detect and reject those whose doctrine is in error.

Question: What did the Ephesus church do?

Answer: They discerned between true and false teachers (and refused to tolerate those advocating false doctrine).

Question: Pastor, why not tolerate error?

Answer: Because false doctrines pollute, poison and paralyze those who receive it.

Fact: In II John 7-11, the church carefully examined visiting ministers to see if they were genuine.

Question: Pastor, why do we emphasize teaching the Bible so much at First Assembly?

Answer: The same reason you have screens in your windows at home:

- #1. The screen lets in the light, (and) #2. The screen keeps out the bugs.

◆ And God expects His Word to do the same thing in your church. (why?)

#1. To maintain doctrinal purity.

#2. To expose error and false teachers.

#3. To protect the sheep entrusted to us.

#4. To refuse entrance to self-appointed leaders who have a personal agenda to serve themselves.

II. Word #2 Is "Correction"

Question: What was the one thing the Lord had to correct?

Answer: (V. 4) "Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love".

#1. Servanthood is great!

#3. Conviction is great!

#2. Patience is great!

#4. Discernment is great!

(But One Danger Has Crept In)

"You're doing what you're doing without a love for Jesus beneath it all"

◆ The church at Ephesus was now in its second generation of believers.

◆ There were those who had come in during the past 30 years since Paul had ministered there.

◆ The labor was the same, but one thing had been slipping.

(What Was It?)

Pure love and pure devotion was slipping away

Question: What does it mean to leave your first love?

Answer: It means something very sobering:

#1. It means Jesus was no longer first place in daily living.

#2. It means believers were putting themselves and their own affairs before the Lord.

#3. It means believers had put programs, service, labor and fellowship before the Lord.

#4. It means people had become more attached and devoted to church than to Jesus.

- ◆ Service had become mechanical and duty driven.
- ◆ Some needed to ask themselves, “Why am I doing what I’m doing?”
- ◆ Some were “cooling off” in their love for God.
- ◆ Some put other things before God’s things.
- ◆ Some had lost the joy, excitement and fervency.
- ◆ Some had seen the oil in their lamps dry up.
- ◆ Some allowed bad attitudes to poison their cup.
- ◆ Some did service without sweetness!
- ◆ Some neglected prayer and became selfish.
- ◆ Some grumbled when it came to giving and sacrifice.
- ◆ Some had drifted out of intimacy with Jesus.

Question: Pastor, how can I know if I’ve left my first love? (ask yourself)

Answer: “Was there ever a time in my life when Jesus meant more to me than He does today?”

- ◆ If so, we’ve left (and gone back) from our first love!

III. Word #3 Is “Calling”

Fact: If there was ever a time when you loved Jesus more than you do today, Jesus calls you to do 3 things in (v. 5):

- #1. “**Remember**” (Where you used to be and where you can be again)
- #2. “**Repent**” (Which means to turn away from whatever has pulled you away from Jesus, and turn back to Jesus)
- #3. “**Repeat your first works**” (which means to restore that original fellowship that was broken by neglect)
 - ◆ Come back to prayer, the Word, worship, service and giving.

Question: What is so glorious about this letter in Revelation 2?

Answer: Jesus didn’t consider it too late for the Ephesians to begin all over again.

Conclusion

Question: What happens if we fail to **remember, repent and repeat** our first works?

Answer: (V. 5) “I will come quickly and remove your candlestick (or I’ll suffer great consequences if I chose to rebell against God).”

Question: What happens if we do **repent and return**?

Answer: (V.7) We overcome and experience real life down here and real life here after.

Question: What will we overcome?

Answer: We overcome everything that pulls our heart away from Jesus and attaches itself to other things!

AMEN!
Bill Kirk, Pastor