

My First Love

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Date: 29 April 2018

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[0:00] If you would please take your Bibles and go to the last book of the Bible, Revelation. If you're visiting with us, that black Bible in the chair in front of you, go way towards the end of that book.

Find page 190. It's actually not on the top. I don't know why they do that, but actually find page 191, and then you'll see chapter 2. We're going to look at chapter 2, verses 1-7 this morning. Revelation chapter 2, 1-7. This is kind of like a filler sermon, so to speak, and yet well worth it and kind of in connection with Exodus and just our thoughts about Christ and focusing on the Lord Jesus.

So we'll do this in Revelation 2, 1-7 this morning. Next week we'll start, which you should see that in your bulletins, the book of Joel. We'll do four messages on the book of Joel. And then I think I'm going to start 2 Corinthians.

I don't know. I might start that later on this summer, but I don't know. I'm having some kooky thoughts. I don't know what to say. Anyways, Revelation chapter 2.

[1:13] We're doing that this morning. Verses 1-7. To the messenger 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, I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and you cannot endure evil men.

You put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not. You found them false. You have perseverance. You've endured for my namesake. You've not grown weary. But I have this against you. You have forsaken your first love. Therefore, remember from where you have fallen, and repent, and do the deeds that you did at first, or else I'm coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent.

Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He 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.

The title was, An Entry-Level Swedish Motorcycle Aims to Be Your First Love. I know all of you were thinking that this past week. The author says this, I'm not going to tell you that the Svartpilen 401, I'm not Swedish, so I think that's how you say it.

[2:47] As Hispanics, we don't speak Swedish. It will be your everlasting love. Eventually you'll outgrow it to move on to something larger, more powerful, but it could be your first love.

It continues. With a single cylinder, four stroke, 373 cubic centimeter engine and six easy gears, this Swedish delight is best served, crossing cobblestones and potholes.

Aren't you feeling it now, people? It's ideal for beginning riders as well as those who don't need to do much high-speed riding on freeways or open roads. I'll give you the website later.

I see that hand, yes. I see that hand, yes. I see those hands. And that's the idea, right? You start with that first love and then you move on to something else, something better, greater, superior. So you outgrow that Zvartpielen. It is S-V-A-R-Zvart. Zvartpielen, 401.

[3:51] Move on from motorcycles, cars, to houses, jobs, games, restaurants, food. Something better, greater, superior.

Even people. Relationships. We want to go from a first love relationship to something better. At least we're hoping that it is.

That's very much a worldly thinking, is it not? In order to be satisfied. Unfortunately, we do the same thing with our Savior.

We're prone to think this way about our Lord. We have this same attitude towards our loving Savior. So by way of encouragement to you, to me, the title of the sermon is simply, My First Love.

My First Love. I'll put in a statement for you, but it's almost like a prayer that I have up here on the screen for you.

[4:59] Jesus, I need you to keep being my first and only love. Jesus, please be my one and only. Let my passion and desire be for you and you alone.

Nothing else and no one else. Be my first love. John wrote to these seven churches. Directed by our Lord.

So these are the very words of Jesus himself. And just to call your attention, when Jesus says, He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Jesus is speaking to the churches and it shoots through time. It shoots through culture to even speak to us today. And then he wrote these to warn us, to encourage us, to rebuke us, and to call us to repentance.

And to call us to repentance. And the first church Jesus spoke to was the church in Ephesus. Which I'll speak about in just a few moments, but let me kind of give you different points.

[6:08] So notice how it begins here with how we love good things. We love good things. They're good things. It's not that loving these things are bad in themselves.

These are good things. We'll look at that in just a moment. But what happens is that these things begin to take hold of our hearts and pushes our Lord out of His place. To the messenger of the church in Ephesus, right?

Ephesus is one of the most important cities of the seven that Jesus spoke to. Here in these first, this chapter, chapter two and chapter three in the book of Revelation.

And really one of the most important churches in all of Asia Minor. It was almost like a pillar among the seven. I'll point this out later.

Ephesus received the most praise from Jesus than any other church. But notice how what Jesus says here in the next part of verse one, the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, the one who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this.

[7:19] Why is this? What's with this metaphor? What's John trying to say? What's Jesus trying to say? The picture is Jesus who's in the midst of His church.

He's here. Jesus is here with us. Jesus is intimately concerned about them. He loves His church. Jesus truly loves His people and firmly calls them back to Him. Interesting. Notice he says, this, verse two.

I know, and he gives nine aspects, nine different aspects about this church that's worth noting by Jesus Himself.

Deeds, toil, perseverance. You cannot endure evil men. You put them to the test who call themselves apostles. They were not. You found them false. Perseverance. I've endured for my namesake. I've not grown weary.

[8:26] We'll drop down to verse six in a little bit. So notice, their deeds, hard work, they're persevering. They have zeal for truth. So they have no tolerance for wicked people.

Mm-mm. Mm-mm. You ain't doing that in here. They test those who claim themselves to be apostles. Apostles with a small a, sent ones, not the apostle, like the twelve.

to give direction to the church and they found them to be false. They knew what they were talking about. They were solid with their doctrine, their theology.

They worked hard at being right, true, astute, and sharp. They were not credulous. He says, you have, in verse three, have perseverance.

You've endured for my namesake. You've not grown weary. A couple other points. They had stamina or steadfastness for the sake of Jesus.

[9:28] They worked hard to stay faithful to the truth for the sake of Jesus. Ephesus received the most praise from any of the seven churches.

Drop down to verse six. Yet this you do have. You hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. We really don't know who these Nicolaitans were.

Although we kind of get an idea if you go to verse 14 of chapter two, he's speaking to the pergammon church. A few things against you.

There you have some who are holding the teaching of Balaam. They eat things sacrificed to idols. They commit immorality. Thus you have some in the way who hold the teaching of Nicolaitans. There it is again.

And then even verse 20. Same idea of committing acts of immorality, saying sacrifice to idols. So this is kind of what these Nicolaitans were doing.

[10:31] But he didn't tolerate this. So there was a commitment to holiness even. Again, Jesus praised in the church for their hatred of what was false, which was against him.

These are good things. Don't you agree? Good things. They had doctrinal integrity and remained faithful to the truth.

They did not budge on any kind of false teaching or give an ear to false teachers. They're doing good things. I mean, you kind of branch out in reference to when we talked about idolatry.

And we have certain desires. I mean, certain desires that we have, desires, they're not bad in and of themselves necessarily. It's when those things become the focus and not Jesus.

And if you take a look at the book of Ephesians, which we won't take time to do, but it seems like this church, it stood for truth. I mean, they were a pillar. No wavering. And yet, that's the danger of doing good things, doing biblical things, right things.

[11:47] Yet, we forsake our love of the best. That's why we're saying, you're my all, you're the best. You're my joy, my righteousness.

Verse 4, I have this against you. You've forsaken your first love. They had completely abandoned what was most important, love. Okay, well then the question, is it love for Jesus?

Is it love for each other? Is it love for the world? He doesn't say that, does he? No. But where does love for each other and love for the world stem from?

Our love for Jesus. Our love for Christ. That's why that's the focus. And yet, we know our love for Christ by our love for others.

Because that's how it shows itself. So it's almost like linked together. They put all their emphasis on sound teaching, which is good. But, sound teaching, apart from passionate loving, is a sure formula of a church that is Christ forsaking.

[13:00] They lost love for the one who's most important. Love for other things rather than for Christ. In other words, it's not meant for us to just get Christ as the ticket.

The ticket to heaven and then move on to something else. That's why sometimes the gospel is presented. He's the ticket. No, Christ Jesus needs to remain our first love.

He needs to constantly be our only love. and that will show itself in how we treat each other. How did this happen?

We don't know. Jesus doesn't say that. Jesus doesn't tell us how this happened. Only that it happened.

And what we do know is the danger of having all the right answers but losing our first love. The love for our Savior.

[14:11] That's what we looked at. We finished up the book of Jonah there in the adult class or study. We finished that up and then you see that. I mean, you see, Jonah knew all the right answers, right?

Oh, because you are. And he quotes Exodus chapter 34. You're the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love forgiving thousands. That's who you are.

He just recited it off and yet he did it kind of with his fingers crossed, right? Because I really don't believe that. Well, as long as it's for me, we may have all the right answers but if we don't love Jesus Christ, it means nothing.

The evil wasn't their organization necessarily or their wrong action necessarily. It was a cold heart. It was a church without affections for Christ. Friends, are we passionless? Are we complacent?

[15:18] We live in a city, a society. We live in a culture is very complacent. We do. Do we have a ho-hum mentality or attitude?

A church with cold mechanical orthodoxy, doctrinal, even moral purity, zeal for truth, a disciplined service cannot replace love for Jesus.

One writer says this, quote, a church may be large and prosperous, zealous for truth and order and purity, laboring patiently and successfully for the name of Christ, yet there may be unseen by human eyes and unsuspected even by herself a secret defect that silently but surely threatens her very existence.

End quote. Each individual member lost their passionate love for Jesus.

So it can be done. What's the remedy? You know, the good part about this, you know, Jesus doesn't tell us how this happened. Okay? That's kind of a bummer.

[16:39] How did this happen? I want to know how this happened, right? I'd want to know. But the good part about this, he actually tells us what can be done. How to remedy this.

How can we get to a place where Jesus becomes our first love again? I have it up here, right? What can be done? Yes. What is the remedy? Three actions we can take. Remember, repent, do.

Remember, repent, do. Do. Remember. Notice what he says in verse five.

Therefore, remember from where you've fallen, repent, and do the deeds you did at first. Okay, let's talk about this. What's this mean? Remember, remember what?

Remember the passion. Remember your zeal for Jesus. Remember. Remember how struck you were that he saved you. Remember how dumbfounded you were when you came to know the doctrines of grace.

[17:51] How much grace he showed you. Have you forgotten that? one time your soul melted.

One time your soul melted with such grateful love that Jesus took away all your sins and you're now forgiven. Once you wrestled in prayer, when was that time, Christian?

when was that time when you were weeping for your own soul? When you were weeping for the souls of the members in this church? When you were weeping for the soul of your neighbors or your relatives that they will come to Christ?

Do you remember that? Passionately, intensely praying to God for the salvation of the unsaved.

Praying. Do you remember praying for God to bring about greater holiness in your life?

Do you remember that? Once you had a drive to serve, minister, to help others in any way, shape, or form.

[19:05] I mean, you're wanting to serve in God's kingdom but it's gone. Remember His divine mercies?

Your vows of thanks? Do you remember those? Your great smiles, your joys, your satisfaction with God and His people? You've forgotten the purification Christ's sacrifice has made for your sins, says Peter in 2 Peter.

You've forgotten. Have you become blind or short-sighted? I mean, when you read Scripture, when you read the Bible, God doesn't say something just once, does He?

It's almost like people think that, I mean, maybe, and I don't mean this in any flippant or disrespectful way, but it's almost like people say, maybe God's like stupid because He keeps saying the same thing over and over.

No, I think the stupidity comes on this side because I just can't, I mean, so, right? I mean, I'm so dull.

[20:24] I'm short-sighted. I don't listen. It's like you tell your kids, I just told you not to do it. Why'd you do that? I don't know. I told you 10 times and you wouldn't.

That's why it's all over the Scripture. It's repeated over and over again because we forget so easily. as the nation of Israel had so easily forgotten great power, mercy, and grace, He delivered them from Egypt and then they turn around and they say, how come we don't have any water?

That's because they so easily forget and we're so prone to forgetting our first love. we want to move on to something bigger and better.

Remember. Number two, repent. And this is bigger because He says it twice. Notice, verse five, therefore remember where you've fallen and repent in the deeds you did at first or else I'm coming to you and will remove your lampstand of His place unless you repent.

He says it twice in one verse so I think that's kind of more important. Break from this sin.

[21:57] So, admit, confess, turn from it. It's amazing. Look at this. Jesus was saying to this church that to forget their first love for Him was sin. Turn from it.

Turn from it. which means we must revive our love, passion, devotion and drive for Jesus alone. We turn from it.

We see it for what it is and we repent. We look to Christ.

Look to the cross. Believe once again in the love the Father has for you in Christ Jesus from whom you will never be separated. Feel His loving arms holding you once again.

That's the essence of the gospel. I mean, is this not the response of the gospel? For someone to see God's wrath to come upon them and yet they see His love in Christ Jesus and they're so overwhelmed by the love and they say, Lord Jesus, I repent and I put my trust in You alone.

[23:13] That's what you should do if you're here not a Christian. You're not a disciple of Jesus. You should respond that way to Jesus. Well, all of us should respond that way to Jesus all the time. We look to Christ. We look to the cross. Feel His arms loving you again. Which means we swallow our pride.

Which means we need to admit our sin of a lack of love for our Savior. Which shows in a lack of love for each other. We repent of our sin of not loving Jesus.

So remember, repent, turn from that. And third, do. Notice He says, Jesus, our Lord, says, do the deeds that you did at first.

They did things because of their passionate, devoted love for Jesus. We don't just sit back and say, well, let go and let God, brother.

[24:23] That's a far cry. I mean, we serve, minister, love, love, get up and care for somebody. You get up and you go care for someone.

You get up and go love someone. You go to the Word. When was the last time you poured over the Scripture, reading, studying, pouring over it?

True, it's not about just doctrinal purity, and yet we seek out God by seeking out Him in His Word. Go deeper into the Scriptures.

Well, but you may say, do. But Jim, I ain't got that loving feeling. So how do I do when I have no joy?

When I have no feeling of love? I'm being hypocritical. No, you're not. Hypocrisy is concealing things and not admitting it, not confessing it, not repenting of your lack of love.

[25:35] That's hypocrisy. If you say, okay, I don't want to do this, I don't feel this, but I'm going to do this, we do asking God to put in us His love.

Put in me your love. See, our goal in loosening our actions with acts of love is that God would be gracious and fill our words and our actions with His great love.

So we do, though you may not feel it, but may we once again feel the sweet, tender mercies of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

A love that melts, warms, revives our hearts towards Him, else all will be lost. We will be struck.

Notice what He says again, verse 5, or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place unless you repent.

If they do not repent of the fact that they were not loving Jesus the way they should, Jesus would remove their lampstand. What does it mean?

[26:57] In other words, Jesus destroys the church. That church ceases to be a church. It would only be a social club.

And that's the truth. If we do not respond accordingly, then our shepherd will remove our lampstand. We will not be a true church. You don't believe me? Drive up the road and you'll see a theologically reformed, theologically liberal, excuse me, church.

People gathering. It's not a true church because they deny the very Jesus that we are teaching right now.

a church can continue only so long on a loveless Jesus course and then it will cease to exist.

Where's the church in Ephesus? It ain't there. I know, it's like, well, come on. Should we expect a church to exist almost 2,000 years later? Okay, I think that's kind of extreme.

[28:06] but there's something to be said for integrity. There's something to be said for longevity. This church has been in existence for almost 60 years.

And in my opinion, it wasn't a true church for a long time. Good thing it doesn't end there though.

Notice how he ends. We looked at verse 6 in reference to Nicolaitans. Notice what he says in verse 7. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches, so listen, and then he says, to him who overcomes, I will grant it either the tree of life which is in the paradise of God.

So we love good things, we forsaken our first love, but our reward if we do this as loving fellowship with our Savior, if we respond in this way, remember, repent, and do, you're rewarded.

He's calling attention, if you have an ear here, it's not just the church in Ephesus, but all the churches too, shoots through time and culture. Pay attention, if you do pay attention, you'll be rewarded, God will reward us if we love him, making him the most important person in our lives.

[29:39] That's what that means, overcomes, is the ones who remember, who repent, who do, they will eat to the tree of life which is in the paradise of God. Why does he say this?

So it means they're going to get saved? He's already talking to churches, why would he say they're going to get saved? What does he mean? In other words, you'll have sweet fellowship with God in the place before the fall, communion with God like it was in the garden.

You just loving your Savior and him just loving you. Blessed companionship. If you're married, you know what I'm talking about.

There's something within the relationship that goes deeper, farther, stronger, the longer you've been married. For some people it doesn't. Jesus is calling us, calling churches, calling his people. Don't we realize that we can have such great joy in a loving relationship with the Father through Christ? A loving relationship with the Son and the Spirit in such a way that we respond with love, grace, mercy, and compassion towards each other.

[31:07] Jesus, be my first love. Jesus, I need you to keep being my first and only love.

Jesus, please be my one and only. let my passion and desire be for you and you alone. Nothing else and no one else. Be my first love.

Embarking upon studying this passage, two songs came to my mind. One, something that most recently came about by Natalie Grant, More Than Anything.

The chorus goes like this, help me want the healer more than the healing. Help me want the savior more than the saving.

Help me want the giver more than the giving. Oh, help me want you, Jesus, more than anything. That kind of runs in connection with this passage, right?

[32:18] Another one I immediately thought of, though, it was a song that was written 30 years ago. So the young people are just like, that's a long time ago.

It wasn't that long. 1988. Song by Petra, My First Love. Listen to the lyrics.

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.

[33:25] 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. It's taken me some time to try to comprehend a love that doesn't change, a love without an end, a love that keeps forgiving, a love of sacrifice and giving.

I delight myself in you, my First Love. If I ever lack endurance, I remember your assurance that your only banner over me is love.

If my heart begins to waver, woo me back, my loving Savior. will me back till I return to 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 love me, Jesus, you will always be, you will always be my first love.

First Love.