

Do You Love Jesus?

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[0:00] We've got a Revelation 2 verse 4 talking about our love and Revelation 2 verse 4 talks about the church at Ephesus.

! And the church of Ephesus had a problem.! What a great loss to be a backslidden church such as Ephesus was then.

He had somewhat against them because they had left their first love. Consider the tragedy of lost love. Seems like the church has left its first love.

We could say that seems true in the modern church today, wouldn't you say? In the present day church. You know, we've heard someone this morning was telling me he's come all the way from Blackwood, we can't find a church in between Blackwood and here.

You know, God help us, Adelaide. What's happening? There should be such a problem. And it seems like churches are closing down, there's a falling away, there's a laxness.

[1:13] Our Lord tells now in the end times that the love of many shall wax cold. There'll be a coldness. Now sometimes coldness can creep up on us. I know, I've found that myself.

If you stay up late and you're doing something and a bit preoccupied and as the temperature goes down you don't realise how cold you've become.

Coldness can creep up on people and they don't even realise. Someone said this, people seldom lose their religion by a blowout, it's usually a slow leak. You know, I know we've got a tyre expert in our midst here and he's always telling me to watch the tyres and it could be a slow leak.

And there was a slow leak a couple of times in my car. And it's not that you lose the tyres by a blowout, sometimes it's a slow leak. And it can happen with faith too. In terms of that zeal for our God, it can grow dim and cold and weaken and lax.

And our Lord found this on the church at Ephesus, he says, so that church repent and return to their first love. Now love for God ought to be a priority for us.

[2:22] And our Lord tells that. In Matthew 22, we read how it says, verse 37, Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind.

This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind. Another gospel says with thy strength. And love thy neighbour as thyself. How is our love for God?

Do we love Jesus? Do we love our Lord? Or are we like the church at Ephesus that lost its first left, its first love? There was a little boy who wondered why a turtle continued to walk after its head was severed.

I don't know why he would see a turtle with the head severed. But for whatever reason, the turtle had its head chopped off and the turtle kept going. And his father said, the turtle is dead but doesn't know it.

[3:32] Now that can happen with chokes, can't it? When you cut their heads off, they keep going. But I wonder if some of us are like that turtle that we're dead but we don't even know it. That can happen with a church, can't it?

That it can be dead and not know it. It would be a good thing for us all to check our spiritual pulse once in a while to see if we're still alive, spiritually alive. A preacher of Eshavna said this, The church has no greater need today than to fall in love with Jesus all over again.

That sense of our love for our Lord, it should be strong. It should be fervent. Many churches in a sense though are spiritually dead. They've fallen out of love with Jesus, if you like.

It's like that and some they don't even realise that. There's been other things crowd him out and he's been lost in the fog. Some thoughts about what does it mean to love Jesus. Number one, commitment. Love means commitment. I know there's some long-weathered couples here tonight. I'm sure, how many years is it? You lost track.

[4:39] 64 years, amen. I know just coming up towards the end of the month, it'll be 40 years since I laid eyes on my wife-to-be. So, time flies when you're having fun.

The thing is of commitment, isn't it? Of commitment. You make a love commitment and that kind of love is a committed love. It's a love that has commitment. It's not some fly by, some passing fancy. It's a commitment that we make. And a marriage is a commitment. And what does it mean to love Jesus? It likewise means a commitment of faith, doesn't it? And that love that he gives to us, of course, for us to have a commitment.

It says in 2 Corinthians 5.14, for the love of Christ constraineth us. There's a sense where God's love, it controls us, the love of our Saviour, our love for our Saviour.

And we're not talking about some sappy, frothy, just emotional kind of love. But a love that is a committed love, it's a commitment. When we love our Lord Jesus, it's a driving force for us.

[5:49] The love of Christ constrains us. It motivates us. It compels us. It drives us. And the love of Jesus has that sense of that commitment, that special commitment, as we trust him.

And that love motivates us. It moves us. It constrains us. We could think there's a worldly example I can quote here of a time where there was a woman burst into a hospital in Los Angeles holding a handgun, and she was going for a nurse who she accused of stealing her husband.

And she fired these shots, and it was mayhem in the emergency room. And then another nurse came and did something unthinkable. She came and hugged the gun-toting woman. She held her and hugged her.

She said, you're in pain. I'm sorry. Everyone has pain in their life. I understand, and we can work it out. And she was able to gently reassure this hurting woman and disarmed her with a hug, with her compassion and understanding.

She said later, I saw a sick person, and I had to take care of her. Now that's what the Lord Jesus does for us really, doesn't he? He sees that we're sick and broken, and he embraces us.

[7:06] He holds us within his love. We ought to likewise have that love that constrains us to reach out. It's a love that has commitment. It's a love that loves him and loves others.

He didn't say, a new suggestion I give unto you. He said, a new commandment I give unto you. A command is to be obeyed, to follow when it feels good and when it doesn't.

And that kind of commitment he calls us to, to loving him. It says, as he said here, if you love me, keep my commandments. He says, you are my friends if you do whatsoever I command you.

And to please him encompasses that loving obedience that he wants from us. He calls us to. He constrains us to serve, to live for him.

There's a commitment there. How are we loving our Lord? Are we committed to our Savior? When Dr. David Livingston was working in Africa, some friends wrote to him and said, we'd like to send some other men to you.

[8:09] Have you found a good road into your area yet? And Dr. Livingston said, if you have men who will only come if they know there is a good road, I don't want them. I want men who will come if there is no road at all.

He had a commitment to Christ that took him into the darkest, furthest of places. He was committed to Christ.

And the love of Christ constrained Dr. Livingston. Are we committed likewise to our love for God? Our love for our Lord? Are we committed to care?

There was a church sign outside of church premises and it said this, we care about you. Sundays 10am only. Yeah, they had the service times.

But of course we know we should care full time, shouldn't we? We should care. The love of Jesus should constrain us and it should be 24-7. The love of Jesus should constrain us full time that we are full time devoted in our love for him.

[9:14] And it's like our internal combustion, isn't it? Praise God. I could say more about such things. Friends, the love of Christ constrains us. That's the point.

That's the point that should motivate us. And it should motivate us more than any human kind of motivation. You know, we could talk about human motivators who would try to motivate athletes by giving them pep talks and trite phrases.

But we are motivated by the love of Christ. That's what constrains us. It's his love. His love for us. Our love for him. Our love for the souls that he loves.

We let his love move us. His love rinks through us. His love prompts our love. And Christianity is Christ.

It's been said it's the life of our Lord Jesus lived out in us. So number one, love means commitment. It's a commitment.

[10:13] Secondly, love means a cost. There's a cost involved. Love takes the steps it takes without regard to the cost.

The cost doesn't stop his love. There's some Baptists in Russia and you've probably heard the story that's been told numbers of times that there was a meeting of believers, meeting in secret under this communist regime in this village near Moscow.

Suddenly the door burst open and there's two communist soldiers there pointing bayonets and rifles at the Christians. And one of the Christians said, one of the soldiers said, we want to be fair about this.

So if you're not really committed to this Jesus stuff, you don't really believe the Bible, we'll give you a chance to leave. Now get up and go if that's you. All but six of the more than 20 left the room for fear of their lives.

And then the two soldiers said, they shut the doors and they said that they wanted to make sure that the insincere ones are gone. We are Christians too.

[11:21] We just couldn't take a chance. Let's study God's word together. So there's a cost there. Now what would that mean for us maybe if that meant that happened for us?

Do we love Jesus? There's a cost there. There's a cost. We shouldn't shy away from the cross. The sacrifice. Matthew 26 we read about the woman who brought an alabaster box.

Take it up there from Matthew 26 verse 6. When Jesus was in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper. Verse 7. Then came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment. And poured it on his hand as he sat at me. But when his disciples saw it they had indignation. Saying to what purpose is this waste?

There's another instance where Mary did the same thing. John 12 verse 3. It tells of a very costly gift. So it tells of this woman in verse 7. It talks about very precious ointment.

[12:28] As a light to Mary's gift. Very costly. And it was poured out. Poured upon him. Poured out at his feet.

It was symbolic of the very heart. There's a cost there. And some called it a waste. To the Lord it was worth it. And some would look at worshippers of the Lord Jesus today.

And they'd say the same thing. They'd say faith is a waste of time. A waste of energy. I know on Saturday there was some atheist fellow. And he was just rubbishing the Bible.

And rubbishing faith. And tying it in with the bad things of certain religions. And saying what a waste of time it was.

Now people would look at true faith. As we know him. And as we worship. They would consider that a waste. But the Lord Jesus looks at it. And he sees the worship.

[13:24] He sees the things of eternity. He sees that faith in Christ is what is of real value. There was a preacher one time back in Bristol, England. And he preached on the text.

You must be born again. And in the congregation there was a brilliant young man. Horatio was his name. And he listened intently. And the preacher gave the invitation.

For those who would trust in the grace of Christ. To respond. To call on the Lord. And this man he was deeply moved. But he said. Not now. I'll run my own life.

And this man. Horatio. He made a fortune. A name for himself. He became a brilliant lawyer. And he was quite successful.

But then at 63 years of age. He himself was convicted of a crime. And sent to prison for seven years. While he was there. Another man visited him.

[14:19] And asked to pray with him. And Horatio said that would be fine. And in the course of the conversation. It came about. The man said. Many years ago. I was in Bristol. And I heard a preacher.

Preach on the text. He must be born again. I was deeply moved. But I. I was so deeply moved. That I committed my life to Christ. And ever since then. Christ has been. My all in all.

And Horatio was silent for some time. And said. I was at the same meeting. I heard that same message. I was deeply moved. I knew my need of Christ. But I rejected him. And then he said remorsefully.

A life. Without God. Is a wasted life. And some would call. This time of worship. A waste. But our Lord sees what it is. It's worship.

And a life without God. Is the true waste. Some would shy away from the cost of discipleship. But later come. To regret that. A life without God.

[15:16] Is a wasted life. Do you love. The Lord Jesus. Here's how someone. Questioned that.

In words. He put it. Do you really love God? Do you love to spend time with him alone in prayer? Do you love to take that great love letter. The Bible.

And read what God. Has written to you. If not. Then I suggest. You really don't. Love God. Friends. Our love for God. It should be something. That is growing.

That is nourished. That is nurturing. That is fresh. And steady. Even in the face of great testing. The stories.

Even of. Of worldly situations. I've got. A story here in front of me. Of a. A man in a North. A North Vietnamese. Prisoner of war camp. And.

[16:13] He made a. A secret flag. That he would. Hold. He. He. Pulled together. Pieces of cloth. And he made. An American flag. That he kept inside.

His pajama top. And. At night. They would. Hang up the flag. And recite the. Pledge of allegiance. The American. Kind of. Acknowledgement.

To their country. And one time. The. The guards found this. And. And beat him up. And took his. Flag away. And then. It says. Still bleeding.

His face swollen. He was gathering bits. Pieces of cloth. Together again. And he was sewing. A new flag. You know. If the world can have. Such a dedication. If the world can have.

Such a willingness. To. To bear a cost. Then what of us. We've got much more. Than some allegiance. To some nation. To some flag. Of earth. We've got a love.

[17:09] For our saviour. Shouldn't we have. The willingness. To. Take. The cost. To take the cost. To be willing to go. The extra mile. Think of the cost.

Of our saviour's blood. It calls us to. Follow him. There's a cost there. In loving Christ. To be a full on Christian. There's a cost.

Are we willing. To pay the price. To spend. And be spent. To spend time. To sacrifice. To give up things. And to take up things.

A preacher. A preacher. Was talking with someone. Who was putting off. Trusting Christ. He seemed hesitant. About the cost. About how it might.

Change his life. And the preacher said. Young man. You talk about counting. The cost of following Christ. But have you ever counted. The cost. Of not following him.

[18:04] In a way. The cost of not following Christ. Is a lot more. Isn't it? The Bible tells us of the love of God, the love of Christ. It's a love that speaks of commitment and a love that tells of paying the cost.

Now thirdly, this love of which we speak, it speaks of communication. Now a love needs to be communicated. It should be shared. It should be something we express, that moves us.

There should be some action to the love that we profess to have. There was a young lady who was reading a book and she found it a very dull book and she put it aside and she thought it was not a very interesting book.

And then she became engaged one day to a young man. And one night she said to him, I have a book in my library whose author's name and even the initials are just the same as yours. What an amazing coincidence. And he said, I don't think so. For the simple reason, I wrote the book. And that night the young lady took that book and stayed up until two o'clock in the morning reading the book again.

[19:19] And it seemed the most interesting story she'd ever read. This once dull book was now really fascinating because she knew and loved the author. And that can be like that.

I know before I got saved I had a Bible in my room that I would not read. But when I got saved it was a different story because I knew the author. Amen. And when you become a child of God you find the Bible interesting.

Because you know the author. You know the one who wrote the book for you. And his message is for you. When we love the Lord, our love for his word is a natural follower.

Love is basic to being a Christian. In a way we are God's living letters as well. As the Bible says that you're really letters.

I'm not sure how the word goes. We are living letters. We are letters written by God. And it's like God's wanting to communicate his love through us, isn't he?

[20:18] He wants that. And this love we're talking about is not sentimentality or just feelings. But it's a practical love. A love that moves us to heal the hurts of others.

To reach out. It's heavenly love and it's also translated. Into the earth. We're meant to live out God's love. That's the point.

The love that we profess, we ought to live it out. Put it into our shoe leather. Just a personal example. I know I had an occasion where a neighbour and I talked about a fence on our boundary line.

And the neighbour agreed to pay a small portion of the cost of cutting down that tree. It was on a shared fence line. So on that basis I went ahead and got a tree fella to cut the tree down.

Then when I went to collect the small amount that she had agreed to pay, she declined to pay it.

And I was quite put out by this and I told her how disappointed I was that she was being dishonest.

[21:28] And she was breaking her promise. And I kind of stormed off after that. And then afterwards I thought, well, actually I was being disrespectful to her.

Even though she was in the wrong, I was not acting like a good neighbour. And even though I was disappointed in her lack of integrity and her dishonouring her word, I went back and I apologised to her that I had been disrespectful to her.

That I wasn't being a good neighbour. And I felt that I just had to clear my conscience, even though she was in the wrong, that I should apologise to her for my wrongdoing. I still considered that she had done me wrong in not repaying what she had said she would pay.

But I wanted to do the right thing, godly thing, by apologising for being disrespectful. She was a much senior person to me. And I just thought it wasn't right. You know, she could pass away.

And I said, you know, what I said to her, well, it's on your conscience. And she didn't pay what she agreed to pay. But really, I thought afterwards, what about my conscience?

[22:40] That I hadn't sorted out that, my disrespect to her. Because friends, we represent Christ. We represent Him and His love. Our faith should be lived out.

It should be real. It should be lived out, such we don't have anything of conscience sake against another. And even if we're treated unjustly, our love should not be deterred.

Friends, there's broken people all around us, isn't there? And I know just this afternoon, there was a woman who lives with stone's throw from this building. And we talked with her this morning, James and I.

And she's somehow got the idea that no one cares for her. She's somehow got the idea that some of the ladies in the church look down on her. And she feels that people don't care for her.

Who will go and reach her? Who will go? Some of the women in this church. Can we make remedy there? She's a tough cookie because I think she's taking drugs and she's not always thinking straight, not meaning to put her down.

[23:49] But she's got this, she wants to come to church, but she's got the idea that people don't care for her. I urge a lady to respond to that.

I can go and see her, which I have done. But she's got it in her head. There's ladies in the church that look down on her. So, there's just a practical need here. There's a practical need.

Someone that we want to reach with the love of Jesus. How can we make that right? The love of God that we've received. How can we communicate that? To make it known.

There's broken people all around us. And we need to show God's love, friends. A man wrote this. More people have been brought into the church by the kindness of real Christian love than by all the theological arguments in the world. More people have been driven from the church by the hardness and ugliness of so-called Christianity.

[24:51] People are looking at us. We are the living letters. Do we love Jesus? Do we love Jesus enough to step out of our comfort zone? Think about others.

Sometimes we get obsessed about ourselves. We don't realise. We're meant to be missionaries. In Luke 10, we read the account of Martha and Mary.

And it says how Martha received Jesus into her house. And Luke 10, 39, it says, She had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word.

But Martha was comforted about with much serving and came to him and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore, that she help me.

And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful. And Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

[25:54] Our Lord says Mary's chosen the good part. Mary's chosen the good part, not the activity and the busyness, her own words, but listening to him.

Do we love Jesus? Our Lord wants us to be as Mary, to not be consumed with the busyness, but to talk with him, to listen to him, to share our hearts.

Now I was thinking on this, and humanly speaking, I was thinking, what if we had a church full of Mary's? There wasn't any Martha's getting things done.

I think there's a bit of a balance there, but sometimes we can be Martha, Martha, can't we? Busy, busy doing this, that and the other, getting the church running straight and everything just how he wants it and how we'd like it to be for our Lord.

But we miss that essential, the one thing that is needful, to sit at his feet and to hear his word. It's not to negate we should be working.

[27:00] The good works of Martha are good, but the one thing that was needful was to not neglect the sitting at his feet. And that communication, there's a communication with our Lord.

I'm talking about love being a communication. Our Lord wants to hear from us. He wants us to sit at his feet. He wants us to hear his word. He wants to hear our prayers. Our Lord wants us to be a communicator, too, of his great gospel love story to our world.

He's not going to send angels into Davin Park. He's going to send human beings. And so that's you and me. He wants your feet to take the gospel.

He wants you to be a communicator of the message. Now, the Lord wants us to be in the church. Friends, and the church is a place of communication, too.

It's not meant to be a monologue from a preacher, but a dialogue, a getting together, an interaction, a loving one another, an exhorting one another about being together with that special bond of love.

[28:14] And we find God's love as we get together. There's a communication. We can love one another despite our many differences, despite our preferences.

We can love one another wherever we're from, whoever we are. And that's the communication God wants in his church. There's a love there that he wants to have in and amongst us.

Oswald Chambers said, beware of anything that competes with loyalty to Jesus Christ. The greatest competitor of devotion to Jesus is service for him. It's, again, that kind of thought of Mary and Martha where we get too obsessed with service for him that we miss that devotion that he

wants, that love that he wants to foster.

We get all caught up in church activities. And you could come to every church meeting and just get so busy that you miss that time sitting at his feet.

He doesn't want us to miss that. And prayer can be one of the things that suffers. As John Bunyan describes prayer, he says, prayer is not a mechanical duty but a wonderful opportunity to develop a loving and caring relationship with the most important person in our lives.

[29:37] Now let's not neglect that communication of prayer. So the love of Jesus is that love that took him to the cross for us. As someone described it, as I contemplate the cross, I grasp that its wonder is not in its appearance but in the superglue of love that took Christ to the cross and held him there.

That superglue of his love held him there at the cross. It wasn't the nails that held him, as some would say. It wasn't the nails that held him but his love held him there. And friends, that love of Christ, our love for Christ, it moves us too.

As we have covered thus far of that commitment of his love, that cost and that communication.

Friends, just to come to some application now, consider his love. Can we be like Abraham of whom it says in James 2, 23, Abraham believed God and was imputed unto him for righteousness and he was called the friend of God.

God wants you to be like Abraham in that sense of being a friend of God. Developing that closeness, that relationship. Moses knew that too in Exodus 33, 11.

[31:00] It says, the Lord spoke unto Moses face to face as a man speaks unto his friend. There's many things we can love. Some would take a friendship with the world which as we know the Bible says is enmity, it's hostility towards God.

The Lord wants us to love him, to build that relationship as Abraham, as Moses. When our Lord met with Peter at the close of the book of John, chapter 21, he says, lovest thou me?

He says it three times. Without love we're a tinkling symbol, a sounding brass. 1 Corinthians 13 is good to take a hold of and think that through.

Pray that through for yourself. 1 Corinthians 13 Do you love Jesus? It's the question. Ephesus had left its first love. Love ought to be a priority.

To love God wholeheartedly with all that is in us. And to love our neighbour as ourselves. Let's not have anything that's not resolved with another. He wants us to love him.

[32:10] There's a commitment here. It constrains us. There's a cost here. The greatest waste is a life without him. And there's a love that costs for a communication. He wants us to share his love.

And that means practically with this woman that lifts the stones through from here. He wants us to share his love. Do you love Jesus? He wants you to put your love into action.

Not just words but live out. As the good Samaritan. Let God's love grow in you. Let him flow his love through you.

Through your heart. The love of Christ. That men and women will see his love in you. And you'll resist that tendency as I failed to be gracious.

But thank God it's resolved now. I'm glad I dealt with that. I don't have that in my skeleton in my cupboard anymore because I resolved it.

[33:15] Let's resolve things. Let's be a loving church. It says in 1 Corinthians 13 that now I buy the faith, hope, charity. These three are the greatest of things as charity or love.

It's kind of interesting isn't it? He didn't say the greatest is faith. It says the greatest is love. The greatest. It's that which he puts the emphasis on here of that wonderful commitment.

Think of the commitment of Christ for you that took him to the very cross. Think of the cost of that. Think of the communication. He wants us to be communicators of that love.

He wants to be your friend as Abraham, as Moses. And he says, do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me? To beat it. Sometimes we've got to hear him a few times for it to sink in.

To do what he calls us to do, whatever that be. There's times where you might be like a Martha, doing, doing, but don't neglect to be a Mary, to sit at his feet, to hear his word.

[34:28] Let's pray. Lord, we praise you that you are the one who loves our soul. And Lord, help us to be likewise moved to consider the souls of others.

We know that your saving is affected by that trust in your grace. But people need to hear it, and we need to tell them. Lord, we pray we've been communicators of that message of love, and tell others of your great love for us.

The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell. Lord, we know we can't put it into human terminology, really. We see the worldly examples of devotion, of patriotism, of zeal for worldly things, yet, Lord, we see the church at Ephesus that lacked that first love.

There was something lacking. There was a coldness that crept in. There was a waxing cold of that love. Lord, help us not to fall into that trap.

We pray that each one here tonight might have that heart to refresh our love for you. Lord, put on our hearts those that you want us to love, to reach out.

[35:45] Help us to love the unlovely. Help us to love those who would be hard to reach. We know there's people all around us as we had a gentleman on Wednesday night that was quite troubled in spirit and likely drug effect.

There's many, many people like that in these streets and all across our city of Adelaide. Many broken, hurting people. People who might be hurt by churches or have some misunderstanding. Lord, help us to love them like you want us to. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.