

First Love

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Preacher: Pastor James Kent

- [0 : 0 0] Thank you, Pastor Caleb, for inviting me to share tonight with the church. This church is special to me because I know where it comes from.
- From the very beginning of Pastor Steve and Donna's ministry, well, before they got married, they come to my church.
- Then they asked me to marry them. Did y'all ever give me any dowry? I don't think. I'm teasing.
- Then they stayed with me quite a few years. He was my work with our youth. I saw him growing in the Word. He was hungry for the Word.
- When somebody gets hungry for the Word, that tells me that God's got something. He's going to use them. Because people that don't get in the Word, they're just trying to get by.
- [1 : 0 3] But people who get in the Word, they want to know what God is saying. And so I knew that God was going to use him, and he did.
- And has. So this is special. This church is special. Sister Donna's special. All her family went to my church. Most of them got saved in my church.
- Yes. So we go a long way back. We've got a lot of connection. Isn't it good you can have good memories?
- And so, like I said, this is special. Leona Gunn gave me orders. She said, whatever you're going to say, you better get up there and say it, because you've got to be out of here by now, 8 o'clock.
- I guess she knows I'm long-winded. But I'm going to do my best to let you out. Okay? Well, before I minister the Word, I want to pray and ask the Lord to speak to our hearts.
- [2 : 1 5] You know, a preacher doesn't reveal the Word to you. He speaks the Word, and the Holy Spirit has to reveal it. He is the teacher.
- When he, the Holy Spirit, has come, the Spirit of truth, he will teach you and guide you into all righteousness. So that's why it's important not only to hear the Word, but to allow the Holy Spirit to plant it deep in your heart, because that's where it's got to get.
- It's good. This book here is just paper, leather, and ink. It kills some cow to make the outside, and a bunch of trees to make the paper.
- But it is the recipe for God's Word. If you do what it says, it becomes life. It becomes truth. And so today, tonight, let's just ask the Lord to speak to our hearts.
- Father, we thank you for this wonderful opportunity to share with the people tonight the Word. Lord, I always ask for special touch of your Spirit and your anointing.
- [3 : 3 2] I cannot do it on my own. Only with your help can we do anything. And I just ask that you would speak to my heart, and then speak to every person under the sound of my voice.
- And let, when we leave, in a little while, let us be able to say it's been good to be in the house of the Lord. And we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. I, uh, ever since Pastor Caleb asked me if I would share, I, uh, of course, I always like to share the Word, and I begin to ask the Lord, what can I share?

What do we need? You know, everything in the Bible is truth. I could just open the Bible anywhere and start preaching to be true. But what truth do we need right now?

Peter said to be established in present truth. In other words, truth that we need presently right now. And I ask the Lord if he would just let me share what we need tonight.

[4 : 47] Now, the Word of God is not just to make you happy. Amen. Amen. Oh, I see some of you dropping your head. Now, you're really looking at me funny.

No. Paul told Timothy, said that the Word of God is, is for reproof, for correction, for doctrine, that the man of God may be perfect.

Sometimes the Word of God has to correct us. Now, that's not a shouting message. That's, uh, that's where you get down, you know, and you have to pull your toes back from getting, somebody getting on your toes.

But anyway, and the Lord began to, he kept sharing with me the, or kept impressing me, about the book of Revelation.

If you want to know where we are living at in the Bible, we're living in the, in the book of Revelation. This book is a diagram and a description of what is happening and will happen before Jesus comes back.

[6 : 01] If you know how to understand it, even if you don't know how to understand it. In Revelations 1 and 3, the Lord said to John, blessed is he that readeth.

I'm going to get that because I want you to understand. It's not, it's not necessary to understand at all. Amen. He said, blessed is he that readeth.

Everybody say, readeth. Readeth. And they that hear the words of this prophecy for the, and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand.

There's a special blessing to just read it. Now, as you read it, the Holy Spirit will begin to open up little nuggets to you. Now, don't go over there and try to find out who the Antichrist is.

Sometimes people ask me about something in there and I say, well, I don't know that. You know, I don't know that. But what I do know, I know.

[7 : 05] And we are living in the first three chapters of the book of Revelation. We're not in the other part yet. It's coming. It's, everything is coming together to fulfill it.

But presently, the church is living in the first three chapters of the book of Revelation. And in those chapters, God told John to write these letters and these words and send them to the seven churches of Asia.

The seven churches of Asia were in what is now Turkey. And if you go online, you can drop them out and see exactly where they are.

And John would write this letter and he would send it to each one of these churches. But he specified what their problem was.

He specified to every church, this is where you're coming up short. Now when I say church, I don't mean just this local congregation.

[8 : 17] I'm speaking of the body of Christ. But in every one of these, he would try to confront them. This is where you are coming up short.

This is where you need to improve. This is where you need to get back to. And I believe before Jesus comes, the church is going to have to really get back to a lot of the basics and a lot of the things that we've left slim.

But anyway, let's start reading. The emphasis was a, it was a special city because it was the major harbor for all of Asia.

And had all kind of ships coming in, bringing goods and all the way from Mesopotamia and all over. And it became a metropolitan area.

It was the home of the religion of the goddess Diana, which was a heathen worship. And it was pretty prevalent in it.

[9 : 28] So when Paul went down there, you can see, if you go to the 18, 19, 20 chapters of Acts, you'll see where Paul went down there. First of all, Paul went and established this church.

He left Timothy and Corinth and he went down to Ephesus and he found some believers and they said, well, what do you believe?

Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed? They said, we'd have not even heard whether they're going to be a Holy Ghost. So evidently, they believed in John's baptism because they had not heard about Jesus.

And Paul baptized them in the name of the Lord Jesus and he laid hands on them. But when he laid hands on them, they received the Holy Ghost and began to speak in tongues and prophesy.

And that was the beginning of the church at Ephesus. And from that time on, it became a missionary church. All the other churches that are mentioned here in these first three chapters were sprung out from Ephesus.

[10 : 36] And they planted them out. And Paul would go to, when he got Ephesus on its feet, he'd go to another city. He'd establish that city, the church there.

I don't have time to go into all of them, but I'm just saying I want to focus on Ephesus, okay? But Ephesus became such a great city. It was called the Highway to Rome.

It was also called the Highway of the Martyrs or the Road of the Martyrs. And the reason was, the Caesar of Rome would come down to Ephesus and take the Christians because they wouldn't bow to Caesar.

They wouldn't bow and worship them as God. And he would come and take the Christians and back to Rome and throw them in the Colosseum for the lions to eat them up.

That's why they called it the Road of the Martyrs. You really had to believe what you believed if you stayed in Ephesus. And so that's, I'm just trying to give you a few things about how important it was.

[11 : 49] But now in the... When you're young, you never think you'll have to use all this.

In the second chapter, the first verse, unto the angel of the church of Ephesus writes, the angel of the church was the pastor.

This was not a heavenly angel with wings coming out of his back because they are not permitted to even preach the gospel, the Bible said. They're not committed to that. So this angel to the church of Ephesus was the pastor.

And God wrote these letters to those that were leadership that were responsible for the church. And he said, these things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand and walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

Seven is God's perfect number. It is a number of completion. You have seven days in a week. All of that is God's way of completion and perfection.

[13 : 16] So the seven stars were the pastors of the churches. The seven candlesticks were the churches. They represented that. Symbolism. Understand this. You have to understand a little bit about symbolism.

Everybody say symbolism. Everything in it represents something. You've got to find out what it represents. But when you find out what it represents, it opens up such a great depth and avenue to understand the scriptures.

And I love the way the Lord started off writing to Ephesus. He said, I know thy works. You think the Lord keeps up with what we do?

Yes. He said, Ephesus, I know your works and thy labor. The word labor there means hard labor. Hard work. When someone is not just working, they're laboring.

They're really putting out extra strength. They're really, you know, it's a little step beyond just working. He said, I know your works, I know your labor and thy patience.

[14 : 26] Hey, these people were pretty good folks, weren't they? I wouldn't mind pastor a church like this. That was work, labored, and had patience.

And how thou canest not bear them which are evil. You didn't want to go around the church at Ephesus and your heart not be right.

You either got right or you left or you didn't go. Because he said, you've tried them. You know the ones that are evil. You can't bear them.

In other words, they didn't condone evil. They didn't just sweep it under the rug at Ephesus. He said, you can't bear it. And thou hast tried them which say they are apostles and are not and hast found them liars.

Let me explain what John or the Lord is saying in that statement. When Paul went down to establish these churches, there were men in that age that would follow Paul after he would labor to get a church established and on his feet, he would go to another city.

[15 : 47] That's an apostle. And when he would go to another city, they'd come in behind him trying to get disciples for themselves. And they'd say, we're apostles too.

We know we got a different, we got a greater revelation than Paul had. We've got something that Paul didn't know anything about. And they would try to confuse the people.

You know, we're living in a time of great spiritual and religious deception. That is one of the signs of the end. Religious or spiritual deception.

You've got to know how to discern what is real and what's not real. It's kind of like I heard about how the FBI trains their agents how to spot counterfeit money.

They make them rub real money. It's got a certain texture. It's not paper. It's a cloth. And it has a certain feel to it.

[16 : 54] You can't duplicate it. Nobody can make it. But the government, they know how to make it. So if anybody counterfeits, they have to use paper. So all they have to do is fill it. They know what it is.

And that's the way we are going to have to be able in the last days to discern between right and wrong and between what God is saying and what people are saying.

And the only way you can do that is know the word. He said, you've tried them to say they're apostles and are not and has found them liars. The Lord uses kind of strong language, don't he?

verse 3, and has born and has patience. Boy, I'm telling this to me, if I just quit reading right here, I'd say this is a perfect church.

You've born and you've had patience for my name's sake, hast thou labored and hast not fainted. Oh, if we could just stop that.

[17 : 59] But I love the way the Lord addressed them. He brought out their good things. He told them how wonderful, how good they were, the good things that they were doing.

He didn't just come out and blast them, you know, you gotta straighten up. He told them the good things. I'm proud of you. You've born, you've labored, you tried them with your apostles.

He says, and you know how to separate them from true and false. And you've got patience and you've borne a lot of suffering because, as I said, they would take the Christians, some of them, to Rome to feed to the lions.

He said, you've labored, you've borne, and you have not fainted. I like that. In other words, they did give up. You see, sometimes people, the least little opposition they receive, whether it's, it can be at home, it can be on a job, it can be anywhere, they begin to give up.

Well, I didn't know I was going to have to stand against that. But you've got to make up your mind, I'm not going to faint. I'm not going to give up.

[19 : 13] And the apostles, this is what they did. They made up their mind they wasn't going to give up. They fainted not. Verse 4, now we get in to what God has said to this church.

Up to now, it sounds like a perfect church. Boy, it's quiet in here. Listen to what verse 4 says, nevertheless, everybody say nevertheless.

I have somewhat against thee. Uh-oh. There's something you're missing. There's something you have overlooked.

We do that in our life many times, don't we? We do a lot of good things. We do, we get in activities in the church. We do things.

We labor. We're born. But somewhere in the process, something happens. Listen to what God said. He said, nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee.

[20 : 23] Because thou has left thy first love. Everybody say first love. You mean a church that could do all these good things that Jesus is telling them about?

You mean they could lose their love? You could do a lot of labors and not do it out of love. Sometimes you could do it out of responsibility.

Sometimes you could do it out of obligation. but when you do it out of love, it takes on a different dimension.

He said, you've lost your first love. I tried to pick that apart and tried to find out what he's talking about, thy first love.

Was it when they first found Jesus and received the Holy Ghost when Paul came to that, was that their first love? I kind of believe they were so excited.

[21 : 26] They had such passion. Oh, they didn't care, they didn't care what come or what went. They had found what they was looking for. First love.

God's love. But somewhere through the process of troubles, trials, tests, and all these false brethren coming in and out trying to confuse them, they let slip that love that they had once had for God and for the work of God.

now the Lord doesn't want you to serve him out of fear. The Bible says come before the Lord with gladness, be happy, be it's an honor to serve the Lord.

And the Lord said here, he said, you've lost that first spark that you once had when you first come to know me. How many people in church, they don't go out and rob a bank, they're not going to go out and do some terrible crime, but they've lost the passion.

They've lost that excitement. Look at somebody and say, are you excited about serving the Lord? I want to be excited.

[23 : 00] Now, I've been in the ministry for over 60 years, and I can't tell you that I could run and jump pews like I used to do over at Cresto when Don and Steve started coming to my church.

That's because I was in my late 20s and 30s. But I believe I still have that desire and that fire inside of me to want to please the Lord.

I want to please the Lord. And in order to please the Lord, you can't please everybody. Amen. If somebody is not going to like what you do because you're trying to please the Lord and they don't want to please the Lord, so they're trying to find fault with it.

So don't worry about that. Just go on and be excited and serve the Lord with gladness. Be happy about it. Be excited about it. Sometimes you'll see on television where they anybody ever heard of the Reader's Digest sweepstakes?

Yeah. Well, sometimes they'll show you a picture of whoever it is will be going up to the house to knock on the door and have a bunch of roses.

[24 : 18] And when they opened the door, they said, you have just won the Reader's Digest sweepstakes. You're talking about screaming. You're talking about jumping up and down and hollering.

They're excited. Ladies and gentlemen, we have something worth more than millions of dollars. There's not enough money in this world.

There's not enough gold in Fort Noth to buy salvation. We're honored. We're privileged to be able to say, I know the Lord.

I know he loves me. I know he's changed my life. So he said, thou hast born and you've had patience, but I have someone against you because I have left thy first love.

You say, Brother Kent, how do I get back to that place? You're not back to that. I mean, you're not out in the world. You're not going out. But how do I get back that passion, that excitement, that joy, that original joy?

[25 : 31] I've seen people get saved and when they get up from the altar, their whole face was changed. They had the biggest smile on their face. They loved everybody. Didn't see nothing wrong with nobody.

That's first love. that's joy. But see, over time, because of the things we go through in life, we tend to let that slip.

And God said, I want you to get it back. If there's ever a time when God's people need to get back to where they used to be, I'd say where they used to be. If we get back where we used to be, we'd be doing good.

I remember when church folks used to go to church and have a revival and it'd be two weeks. You didn't go a night or two.

It was a two week revival. You went every night. The parents worked, the children went to school the next day, but you went to church every night, two weeks.

[26 : 39] You was there. They were excited. That was their joy. That was their life. So God wants us to get back to that place where we serve him with excitement.

I think they wrote a song somewhere some time back. It said, get all excited, go tell everybody Jesus Christ is king. Yeah.

There's three things you got to do to get back to that place of first love. Number one, Jesus said, remember from whence thou art fallen.

Everybody say remember. You got to go back in your life. Does anybody know where you can go back to the spot or place where you got saved?

You need to revisit it sometimes. Often. That's where you really got your life straight up. That was the joy. And when you got up from there, it felt like a thousand pounds was lifted off your shoulder.

[27 : 56] You felt so free. You felt so clean. And the Lord said, I want you to remember that.

You say, well, how did I get it? The same way you got it the first time. You get away with God. You spend time with God.

God. No relationship can prosper if you don't spend time with one another. The husband and wife relationship, they can't, it cannot be a happy or enjoyable if they don't have time.

A relationship means you relate to one another and you spend time with one another. We cannot serve God in the way we need to if we don't have time for him.

We got to spend time. Even if you have to leave the dishes dirty, even if you have to leave some dirty clothes in the hamper, spend some time with God.

[29 : 07] Now, here corporately, the church corporately, as we are here today, this is wonderful because this makes you fellowship. This gives us fellowship with the rest of the church, the body.

And we're among people of like faith. We're among people who love one another. But when you walk out the doors, you have entered into Satan's kingdom.

It ain't gonna be that way when you go into work on that job tomorrow. Right. Right. Right. Right. Right. Right. And that's why you had to spend quality time with God.

I started to say something, but I'm not gonna say that. Thank you, Lord, for giving me wisdom. Amen. Remember. Everybody say remember. Remember.

Therefore, whence thou art fallen, remember where you fell from. Yeah. And the next stage, the next thing you got to do is if you want to get back that first love, you've got to remember, then you've got to.

[30 : 26] What did he say? Anybody follow me? He said, repent. I thought that was for drug addicts and alcoholics and thieves.

And you mean you're writing to a church that's done so many good things and yet you're telling them they need to repent? I really wonder what would happen if we could get back to this place.

I just believe God would do such a miracle move of the spirit that we've never seen before. But he's not going to do it if we don't care one way or the other.

We're not at the point where we really want it. Nevertheless, he said, remember therefore from whence thou art falling and repent.

You know repentance is not crying. Repentance is change. It means to change. You can cry.

[31 : 38] I've seen people go to an altar and they're crying, they're crying, and I would try to help them and I'd say, do you feel like you got through? Do you feel like you're saved? No. And I would try to explain to them how they have to believe.

But tears do not mean you have changed. Actions means you have changed. Your actions are going to change.

repentance. Repentance means you start doing, you change, you start doing things differently. The church, not the world. I'm not talking to them folks down Main Street in Greenville now.

I'm talking to the church. He said, repent. You know, sometimes we just, we're not even aware.

sometimes how far we slip away from God. It's kind of like a boat. You ever went fishing and you're out in a boat and you want to, you got in a good place where you think you can really catch some good ones and you let out the anchor.

[32 : 46] But somehow, some way, that boat starts drifting. And you'll be out there, your mind's on that little, that bauble thing, what do they call it?

You're looking at it. Your mind ain't on drifting. After a while, you'll look up and say, my Lord, I'm on the other side of the lake. You didn't feel it, but you were drifting.

This is how easy it is for us to drift away from the things of God. We don't really mean to, but it just happens.

And so John said, you need to change. Change what you're doing. Repent. Now, when you repent, that means you take responsibility for what happened.

That's the hardest thing in the world for humans to do is take responsibility. It's their fault. It's her fault. It's his fault. It's mom and daddy's fault. It's the government's fault.

[34 : 00] We have to learn to take responsibility for our actions and our experience of relationship with God. The pastor's not responsible to make you spiritual.

He can't make you spiritual. He can't make you read your Bible. He can't make you pray. That's up to you. That's up to you to spend time with God and say, God, I want you more than I want anything.

More than money, more than possessions. I want you more than anything. And when you get to that place, that's when you begin to see God reveal himself to you in a way you've never known it.

He said, remember, repent. Oh, I've got, it's just 646.

I've got a lot. That's in Alabama. I'm on Alabama time. The third thing he said you've got to do to get back to that first love, he said, you've got to do your first works over.

[35 : 20] Go back to where you started. Go back to where your relationship with God began and start from there and start building back on your relationship that you have now with God.

Build it. Do your first works over. When we do that, that's when people really start getting a hold of God and they start doing things that they normally don't do.

They start showing up for church. not just on Sunday, but the midweek.

When they do their first works over, because when you got first, you got to say you couldn't get enough of God. You want to be in church every night. He said, do your first works over.

God loves us. As I said, he didn't speak this to the center and to the people out there. He spoke it to his church, a church body. And I would admonish you, in the hour we are living in, my friend, I don't know if you keep up with world events and things, but what's happening in the world has been prophesied by God, by the prophets.

[36 : 50] Daniel, the book of Revelation, they are coming together. They are coming together. Things are developing so fast that we can't, we don't have time to fool her.

We don't have time to just say, well, I'll someday I'll do that. Someday I'll change. Someday I'll get back really down to business with God.

You know, there's a lot of prodigal sons and daughters that they started out loving God. If I had every prodigal son or daughter in Greenville that had once served God and had once had a relationship with God, but somewhere they got their eyes off of Jesus and they got it on people.

You see, you can't get your eyes on people. People are imperfect just like we all were. Somebody asked me, why does God use the imperfect people?

I said, because that's the only kind of people they are. But you must keep your focus on Jesus.

[38 : 06] Paul said in Hebrews 12, looking unto Jesus, the author, the finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the majesties in heaven.

So, the Lord wants us to get back in this hour we're living in, if we could just, people could see us so excited about Jesus, so excited that God has changed their life, that we're not what we used to be.

We're different. Something's changed. Believe me, people will know. You don't have to tell them, you don't have to thump them over the head with a Bible, they'll know.

They'll sense it. They'll say, what happened? You're not the same. What happened? That's when you have the opportunity. They open the door, you have the opportunity to tell them.

I love the way the Lord ended it, and Sister Leona, I'm about to wind up. The Lord started off complimenting the church at Ephesus.

[39 : 31] And listen how he ends it. Verse 7 said, he that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

Do you have an ear tonight to hear it? We all got two ears, one on both sides of our head, but that's not the ear he's talking about. Are you hearing it?

Are you, is the Holy Spirit driving it home? He said, he that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Oh my goodness. Jesus said, if you'll get back to where you used to be and serve me with gladness, especially at this end time, I'm going to give you a blessing. He said, you're going to get to eat of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God.

Is it going to be worth it? Yes. Yes, it will be worth it. Tonight, I just will leave these thoughts with you.

[40 : 42] I hope that somehow they may have sparked a desire for you to question yourself. I'm not your judge.

I don't know where each of you stand with God. You know and God knows. I don't want to. I'm not your judge. I don't want to know. I want you and God to work this out.

But begin to think, is there something in my life that would withhold me from getting that first love back? That first joy?

That first excitement? Lord, if you show me, I'll do, I'll get it out. Now, don't ask the Lord to show you because when you do, he's going to show you.

Now you're obligated. You done told him, if you'll show me, I'll get it out. So, I just admonish you this in the next days ahead.

[41 : 51] Spend some time with God and say, God, I want to serve you because I love you, not because I'm afraid of going to hell. Now, if that was the only reason to serve him, that'd be a good reason. But I don't serve God just to miss hell.

You've got to love him. And when you serve God out of love, the Bible says, who shall separate us from the love of God? It's love that holds you to God, not fear.

And when you love him, it's like a man and a woman, a little couple just get married. They'll live in a teepee and drink branch water because they're in love. And that's what the Lord wants you to do.

Lord, no matter what I need to do, I'll do it. I'll repent. I'll remember. And I'll do my first works over. And I believe the Lord is speaking to all of us.

I put myself, you know, through the years, through the years of over 60 years, I've had to many times sit down with God and say, now, God, why am I preaching?

[43 : 15] Am I preaching because I've been preaching since I was 14 years old? That's just what I know to do. Or am I preaching out of the call of God and the anointing of God?

And I say, God, I don't want to lose that anointing because if I lose that anointing, my words won't do anything. They're sounding brass and taking simple, my words.

But when you walk in the anointing, when you speak, somebody receives it. Just like I believe somebody here has received what I've said tonight.