**Do The Works You Did At First**

Revelation 2:1-7

Key Verse 2:5

*“Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.”*

1. **Read v. 1-3.**

*“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. 2 “‘I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. 3 I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary.*

**Who is the stated recipient of this passage (1a)?**

* The angel of the church in Ephesus
  + Jesus’ message was *“To the angel of the church in Ephesus”* but the angel wasn’t the final recipient but the relay that Jesus was using to bring his message to Ephesus.
  + The word Angel means “messenger” and the job of a messenger is to relay a message from a sender to a recipient.
  + As Revelation 1:1 said, “He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John”
  + Angels are Jesus' tool to relay his message to his churches.
* Angels are Jesus’ tool that he holds in his right hand.
  + In chapter 1, Jesus said, *“As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand…the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches…”*
  + These angels of the seven churches are like a tool in the *“right hand”* of Jesus to accomplish his purpose by relaying his message to his churches.

**What aspects of himself did Jesus state in his open address to this church (1b)?**

* Jesus revealed himself to the church in Ephesus in two ways:
  + He who *“holds the seven stars in his right hand”*
  + He who *“walks among the seven golden lampstands”*
* These two aspects of Jesus will become important when Jesus addresses what is wrong with this church in verses 4-5.

**What did Jesus say he knew about (2a)?**

* Jesus knew 3 things…
  + Jesus knew their *“works”*
    - The greek word is Ergon (er'-gon). It’s primarily translated as “deeds” or “works”
    - Jesus cares about our works, he knows everything about them—both what we do and what we do not do.
    - Jesus opens nearly every church address with this statement, *“I know your works…”* (or a slight variation of it) which shows that Jesus cares deeply about the “works” of his church.
    - How could he not be focused on this issue? The works of this church were directly related to their faith.
      * For as James wrote, *“What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?”* —James 2:14
      * And, *“So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”* —James 2:17
      * And, *“For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.”* —James 2:26
      * Jesus also stated, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do…”* —John 14:12
  + Jesus knew their *“toil”*
    - This toil is a word for intense labor. It’s when someone works hard and then does a little more.
  + Jesus knew their *“patient endurance”*
    - Jesus knew that the church of Ephesus was steadfast and not easily moved by situations and circumstances. They were a church with deep roots in truth, a very noteworthy characteristic.

**What type of dangerous attack did this church successfully defend against (2b)?**

* False Apostles
  + The Ephesus church did a good job of holding to the truth and not letting themselves be infiltrated by false believers.
  + The Ephesians church could not *“bear with those who are evil”*
    - Several other churches (Pergamum, Thyatira) were not as absolute about evil people and *“tolerate[d]”* them, thereby allowing themselves to be infected with falsehood. Not so with Ephesus believers.
  + They *“tested”* these men to see if they really held to the truth or not. Instead of letting themselves be flattered or tricked by these evil men they “tested” them and after finding their falsehood revealed it.

**What do their successes reveal about this church?**

* The church in Ephesus really loved the truth and did an amazing job of defending against the corruption of false teaching from false believers. It can’t be understated how great this point is.

1. **Read v. 4-6.**

*But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. 6 Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*

**What did Jesus have against this church (4)?**

* They had *“abandoned the love [they] had at first.”*
  + The love being mentioned here is “agape” love, the love that seeks the highest benefit of others. It is a love that’s focused on other people. This is the love that John wrote, when he said, *“God is love.”*
  + In the past, this church practiced agape love for each other and the lost world. They lived and worked as Jesus would himself. By living out agape love, the love that seeks the highest benefit of others, they shined the light of Jesus.
  + This church *“abandoned the love [they] had at first,”* that is they stopped practicing Jesus’ agape love. Why was this a serious issue?
    - No longer abiding in Jesus’ love
      * The opposite of “abandoning” is “abiding” or “remaining”
      * John 15 says we are to *“abide in Christ”* (ESV) or *“remain in Christ”* (NIV) by obeying Jesus' command to *“love one another.”* If the Ephesian church *“abandoned”* the love they had at first, they essentially abandoned abiding in Christ.
      * John 15:9,10 helps us understand the implications of abandoning the love they had at first.
        + *“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.”* —John 15:9,10
    - No longer perfecting God’s love
      * 1 John 4:12 says, *"No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is PERFECTED in us."* A couple verses later John 1 says, *"God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God...by this, is love PERFECTED with us..."*
      * What is a church supposed to be doing? Answer: perfecting God's love in our life and in our church. That is, practicing Jesus' agape love, the love that seeks the highest benefit of others, even at personal cost.
      * Naturally, we don't know how to love like Jesus. But as we continue to practice His love, by doing the work of love, we are *"perfecting"* God's love in us.
  + We can see now why it was such an issue that they had *"abandoned the love [they] had at first"*.
  + Why would they “abandon this love”?
    - Too expensive
      * Agape love is personally very expensive to express.
      * God, showing agape love, gave his one and only son as a sacrifice for sin, so that sinners could be redeemed. The Father didn’t withhold his Son, his only son, whom he loved. Instead, God so loved (agape) the world that he gave his one and only Son.
      * Jesus, by coming to this world and taking the wrath of God upon himself so that sinners could be redeemed paid the expensive cost to love (agape) us.
      * To show agape love to us was a personally expensive sacrifice for both the Father and the Son. However they showed this love to us. We are amazed at the agape love of God and Jesus!
    - Not required
      * As a church that focused on affirming and protecting the truth (something Jesus clearly recognized) the Ephesians back slid in their adherence and emphasis to love one another as Jesus commanded them.
      * Holding to the truth is critical but they should hold to the command to agape love their brother, sister and neighbor as themselves.

**What were they to remember; why (5)?**

* *“Remember therefore from where you have fallen”*
  + In the past this church was loving one another and doing the work of love. When they were loving as Jesus loved, they were on the right track and experienced God’s grace and the work of the Spirit.
  + In the past they were anointed and successful in Christ but they had grown accustomed to their current situation and the absence of living a life of love. As a result, they had forgotten the past and now needed to *“remember.”*

**How were they to reconcile this issue before Jesus?**

* They were to do 2 things…
  + *“Repent”*
    - Repent means to have a change of mind, opinion or view of something. For the Ephesians they should repent of thinking it was acceptable to live as Christians who firmly held to the truth but were partial in obeying Jesus command to love one another.
  + *“Do the works [they] did at first”*
    - After repenting, the Ephesian church was to go back to living lives of agape love and the works that accompanied the expression of that love.

**What consequence did Jesus seriously warn them about?**

* Jesus warned them that he would remove their *“lampstand”* if they didn’t repent. This warning was given to show how serious it was to abandon the love they had at first.

**How does this correction tie into how Jesus revealed himself in v.1?**

* Jesus is the owner and keeper of the lampstands. He walks among them to tend to them so that the light can continue to shine through them.
* For the Ephesian church, their abandoning of love meant that they ceased to shine Jesus' light. As a result, the owner and keeper of the lampstands would remove them and evidently replace them with another lampstand.

1. **Read v. 7.**

*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.’*

**What is the meaning of the expression, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”?**

* This message to Ephesus was from Jesus and administered by the angel of the church. However, the message itself was spoken to the hearts of the believers by the Spirit. The voice of the Spirit in this message to Ephesus was not loud or overtly conspicuous. It was like a quiet whisper.
* Those who had a heart to hear what the Spirit was saying would hear and heed the message, others would not.

**Despite many good points and a serious area of correction, what did everyone in this church still need to do (7b)?**

* Conquer
  + The church of Ephesus needed to “conquer” and be victorious over their abandoning of love. They needed to conquer their backsliding and abandonment of Jesus’ call to live lives of agape love.

**What special gift is granted to everyone who “conquers”?**

* Jesus “grants” the right to “eat of the tree of life”

**Why is this reward significant for every Christian?**

* The tree of life is found in the last chapter of Revelation. The tree of life is restored to everyone who is victorious and is a conqueror. Jesus grants access to God’s tree of life—the restoration of paradise.
* God’s paradise and kingdom is for the people who receive Jesus and “abide” in Jesus’ love through living a life of agape love. Amen.