

Bring back that First Love! (Church of Ephesus!)

Revelation.2:2,3

'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false, and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake and have not grown weary'.

Drifting in the ocean!

It is so easy to drift in the ocean. If you don't keep an eye on the seashore, you may start moving toward the deeper part of the ocean. You must always watch the shore often to ensure you are not drifting too far away from the shore.

God cannot tolerate even one sin in our lives! In the first century, everything went well for the Church of Ephesus except one thing! They lost their love for God and started drifting away from The Lord and into the sea of the world. They took their eyes off the Lord!

Churches are being evaluated every moment by Jesus Christ Himself. Just like Teachers grade our children, Jesus is grading our church, and giving us feedback. We must identify our flaws, and quickly correct them! Imagine the seven (7) churches are like our seven (7) denominations! Every denomination has some good things and some bad things! Take what Jesus said about these seven churches personally and let us take those instructions seriously to correct our mistakes. Pay attention to every Word Jesus says!

Ephesus History: Greeks occupied the area since 1200 BC. 250000 people lived there!

The Temple of Artemis was one of the ancient seven wonders of the world. It stood intact from 360 BC till 260 AD. In Latin, this goddess is revealed as Diana. (Acts 19- great Diana!)

Romans took over Ephesus and made it even better!

ΙΧΘΥΣ

Pizza slice circle with the
the Greek letters (ΙΧΘΥΣ) an acronym for: Iēsous Christos, Theou Yios, and Sōtēr, translated into:

Jesus Christ God's Son and Savior.

Romans did not understand it first, but one Roman general figured it out and he rounded up almost all the Christians in Ephesus and executed them through their morbid sports of gladiators, fighting against hungry tigers and lions! (Hebrew 11)

St. Ignatius called this city a highway of martyrs!

Let's hear what The Lord has to say to the church of Ephesus, and us through this Word!

The first point we can infer from this church is that:

1. Jesus is the Lord of the church!

Revelation 2:1 "To the angel 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:

Seven stars point to angels. Are they human pastor or real angels? We are not sure! The bottom line is this:

Jesus is in absolute control of all churches, and He is watching with His Fiery eyes every move of everyone. Children, this is not a playground but a Holy Place. Adults, this is not a gossip place. It is the House of the Living God and a place of prayer. Let us behave ourselves with reverence knowing well that The Lord is Here!

Jesus knows our works, and He is watching constantly!

2. The Church of Ephesus was almost perfect!

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They had perseverance and patience, and they worked very hard, and endured persecution also! They stood for the right doctrine and exposed those false apostles! Remarkable church!

Who are those false apostles?

1 John 4:1-3 "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

Note the word **false prophets** and the **spirit of antichrist**! It was already there. Are we looking for a human person or the anti-Christ spirit?

Who are these false apostles according to Paul?

2 Corinthians 11:13,22,23 "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ?-I speak as if insane more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death.

These false apostles were Jewish! Were they Christians at all? Did they believe that Jesus is Lord and Christ the Savior? The ancient Christian confession was very simple! Jesus Christ, God's Son, and Savior, who died on the cross for our sins and rose again on the third day for our justification and redemption! Anyone who opposes this cannot be a Christian!

Were they the circumcisers of the Gentiles mentioned in Galatians?

Acts 20:29,30 "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them." (Acts 20:29, 30 NASB)

The Church of Ephesus was well rooted in the Word of God, and they could easily expose the false believers!

3. Ephesians hated the DEEDS of Nicolaitans!

Revelation 2:6 "Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate."

Who are these Nicolaitans?

Acts 6:5 "The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.

According to some tradition, Nicolas went astray and started a cult! What was his teaching? No one knows. It could be that since we are saved by grace, we could live as we please kind of false doctrine. Antinomianism! Or it could be Gnosticism which believes that anything that is flesh is evil! Something had to do with flesh and spirit!

Or is it the logic that says that Jesus Christ paid for my past, present, and future sins, so I can live as I please? Eventually, I will be saved.

2 Corinthians.10:3 "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh,"

Jesus wants us to walk in the Spirit, and not after the fleshly desires and passions! He hated these Nicolaitans who were fleshly. Let us hate that way of fleshly life also!

4. Ephesians lost their "First Love".

Revelation 2:4,5 "But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore, remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place unless you repent."

Let us see a glimpse of this first love of Ephesians in the book of Acts, chapter 19!

The Holy Spirit stopped Paul from going to Asia, but on his way back, the Spirit allowed Paul to go to Ephesus!

Timing is in God's hand!

God performed mighty miracles through Paul at Ephesus! Seven Jews tried to imitate and cast out an evil spirit! The evil spirit said, I know Paul, I know Jesus, who are you?"

Acts 19:16 "And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

After this incident, we could see the first love of Ephesus!

Acts 19:17-20 "This became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified. Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices."

And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone, and they counted up the price of them and found fifty thousand pieces of silver. So, the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.

We can see the Ephesians' deep love toward Paul also!

Acts 20:36-38 "When he had said these things, he knelt and prayed with them all. And they began to weep aloud and embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him, grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they were accompanying him to the ship."

You could see the love for The Lord! They burnt the memory of their old life. We could see their love for the servants of God!

They wept, hugged, and kissed Paul.

Church is a place of relationships. When Jesus said behold, your mother, behold your son, He was not kidding around. A good Church truly turns into an extended family, and we rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep! Developing intimate relationships with God and each other must be a real goal of every church!

Have you lost that first love for The Lord? Remember the time you came to The Lord and was saved through His Spirit of grace! Remember that love, passion, and commitment for The Lord? What

Same question, we can ask our spouses. Where is our first love for each other? In the beginning of our marriage, we loved our spouse so much. What happened to that love now?

Jesus does not want to hear any excuses! We ought to repent and bring back that First love!

We lost that love somehow. Let's go back and find that love right now! If you lose your car key before you leave the church, will you not go to every nook and corner where you were and look for that key? Likewise, let us trace back where we left out. We somehow pushed the Spirit of Christ and started filling our hearts with worldly desires and passions. It is time now to repent and come to Christ! Stop drifting in the sea of the world!

Repentance is not just saying sorry! You may take the left turn at the signal instead of the right and go in the wrong. It is not enough that we say sorry to our Lord, we must make a U-turn come back to the intersection, and then continue in the right direction.

Love is everything. If love grows cold wickedness multiplies like weed in the lawn. Our God cannot compromise one thing that is Our love for Him, and for others! Jesus was so angry with Ephesus; that he gave a warning Shot that He will pull the plug out! He will pull out the oil of Spirit. Once saved always saved. God could take the lamp stand away! Be careful and repent! Don't take God's love for granted!

Wow! What a frightening threat for Ephesus! If this happens to a Green tree, what will happen to the dry!! They were perfect in almost everything,

Beware and repent! God could remove the lamp of eternal life, and He could close down our earthly church too! Let us not be careless, and drift around in the ocean of life!

5. He wants us to listen to Him carefully and follow Him.

Revelation 2:7 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.'

God wants us to hear carefully what the Spirit is saying to these seven (7) churches. The same measure He measures them, He will measure us also! Putting God first in everything is an important lesson to learn in our lives. God wants total focus on Him, and not partial!

To him who overcomes this temptation of drifting into the world, God promises the fruit of eternal life from the Tree of Life which is in the Paradise of God.

This word **paradise comes only 3 times in the Scripture!**

When Jesus promises the thief on the cross this paradise

Paul's reference to a young man being caught up in the 3rd heaven in Paradise! (2 Cor.12)

And in Revelation 2:7 tree of life in paradise.

Conclusion/Summary:

Bring back that first love!

Stop drifting towards the world!

Move continuously toward Jesus Christ, God's Son, our Savior!

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