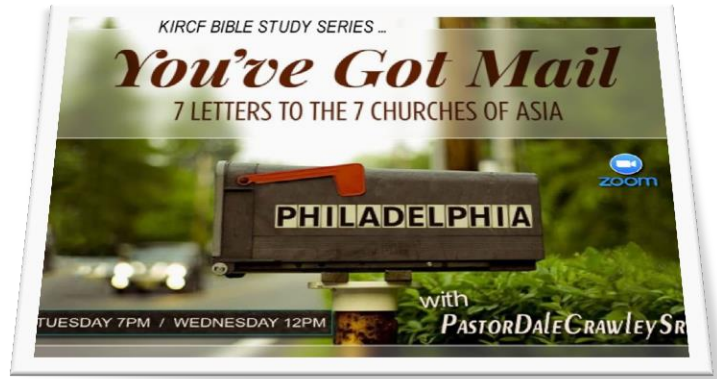


# 1 – EPHESUS: First Love “The Loveless Church”



“<sup>1</sup> To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: <sup>2</sup> "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; <sup>3</sup> and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. <sup>5</sup> Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place — unless you repent. <sup>6</sup> But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. <sup>7</sup> "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.'" --- Revelation 2:1-7 (NKJV)

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John’s description of Christ shows us how Jesus knows absolutely everything there is to know about these seven churches. Christ doesn’t merely stand in the midst of the churches. Instead, 2:1 says **that He walks among them** ... scrutinizing them with a keen eye, examining them from every possible angle. Nothing can escape His notice. He’s fully aware of their every thought, intention, and motive, and He cares deeply for each one. His eye is on the church because He loves the church. What concern did the Lord Jesus have for the church at Ephesus? We study the context of the messages, what they meant for the original churches, and what they mean for us today.



Jesus sent a “**personal message**” to seven first century churches in Asia Minor. Even though these messages were sent to specific churches of that time, they can also apply to the church today. We can learn from each of these messages and heed the warnings of Jesus so that we might avoid the problems that they fell prey to.

**We begin with the church at Ephesus.** At the time this letter was written, Ephesus was a major city of Asia Minor and a seaport. Paul had visited Ephesus around A.D. 53, about 43 years before this letter in Revelation was sent to them. **Ephesus was the church that had everything but had lost the main thing.**

If we were to go there today, we would find nothing but ruins. In the first century, the city of Ephesus was the most important city in Asia Minor. Paul planted the church at Ephesus sometime around 53 AD. Timothy then became its pastor, as did the Apostle John.

To be sure, Jesus had some compliments to give to the church. He says ... *“I know your works!”* He compliments them for works such as their good deeds, their endurance through trials, and their commitment to sound orthodoxy. Jesus has more positive to say about the church at Ephesus than He does negative ... **but He does have one serious concern, the church had left its first love!**

**When love for Christ begins to slip, it doesn't matter how busy you are. You'll always go backward!** We can serve, sacrifice, and suffer for Christ and yet not really love Him. We can attend services, teach classes, and preach sermons, and yet not really love Him. The Ephesian Christians were so busy maintaining separation that they were neglecting adoration. Labor is no substitute for love. In spite of the privileges that it enjoyed, the church at Ephesus was in danger of losing its light. The church that loses its love ... will soon lose its light, no matter all the good ‘stuff’ it has going on.

Again, the church of Ephesus had many positive qualities; Christ commended them in five specific ways—they were dynamic, dedicated, determined, disciplined, and discerning (Revelation 2:2-3). But verse 4 reveals where they went wrong.

**“Nevertheless, I have this against you, that you have left your first love.”**

**Everything about the Ephesian church looked good on the outside ... but inwardly they had heart trouble.** Their devotion to Christ was waning. **If you find yourself in this place with your relationship with Christ ... here is a three-part formula on how to return to your first love.**

## REMEMBER

- **“Remember therefore from where you have fallen”** (Revelation 2:5). If we have left something or someone ... the first step is to remember where we started!

## REPENT

- The next logical step after remembering where we started and realizing where we are now is to repent. This means to reverse course and go in the opposite direction. “. . . *repent* . . .” (Revelation 2:5).

## REPEAT

- Repeating to the original good works will help you get back to the place where you began. “. . . *do the first works*” (Revelation 2:5). Return to what you did when you first became a Christian—the spiritual disciplines that kept you close to Christ and motivated to follow Him.

If the believers in the church at Ephesus (or any other church for that matter) refused to return to love as their true motive for life and service . . . then Christ warned that he would act quickly to “*remove your lampstand from its place*” (Revelation 2:6).

As believers and as a church, God intends for us to shine the light of his glory into the spiritually darkened world around us. **A loveless church** . . . no matter how diligent, fails to accomplish this mission and therefore risks being removed from commission entirely. Such a church (*such a person*) . . . risks shutting its doors and removing its place in the circle of churches forever.

## A Promise of Personal Blessing

In conclusion, Christ urges every believer with working ears to pay attention to the message he gave to the church at Ephesus (Revelation 2:7). This was a private message with all Christians and every church in mind.

- ***Those Who Persevere In Love Are True Believers!***

Those who hear this message and respond with increased love . . . **will** give evidence of their genuine faith in Christ. **They will** persevere to the end of this life and overcome the many spiritual challenges they have faced – whether the challenge of discerning and resisting false doctrine, the challenge of resisting immorality, or the challenge of maintain the right position with the right disposition, with love as their underlying motive.

These true followers of Christ will suffer much in this life, including the temptation to stop living and serving in love. Yet in the end . . . they will be richly rewarded for they will be given free access by God “*to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God*” (Revelation 2:7).

***“You’ve Got Mail . . .”***