

EPHESUS: WHAT TO DO WHEN THE GLOW IS GONE
Revelation 2:1-7
Revelation Revealed Sermon Series: Sermon 3

Introduction

Take your Bibles tonight, please, and turn, in the Word of God to the Book of Revelation Chapter 2 and Verses 1-7.

We're continuing tonight our sermon series Revelation Revealed as we begin tonight looking at the Seven Churches of Asia.

Chapter 2 begins the second section of the book as outlined in Chapter 1 verse 19. Chapter 1 as you remember constitutes the things which thou hast seen and John tells in Chapter 1 of that which he saw.

Beginning at Chapter 4 we have the third section of the book and the future vision of the things which shall be hereafter, beginning at chapter 4 to the end of the book.

But in between chapters 1 and 4 are the things which are, chapters 2 and 3. The things which are the messages to the seven churches of Asia. They contain a divine revelation and exhortation pertaining to the present age in which you and I live.

Now there are 3 different ways in which we should approach all seven of these letters if we are to get from them what God wants us to know.

First of all, we must understand them in their **primary association**. These are real literal letters written to seven literal churches of Asia minor. There are some similarities in these letters.

Each begin with I know thy works. Each of the letters has a special promise to him that overcomes. All seven of the letters have the same concluding sentence. He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. Each has a description of Jesus Christ which is appropriate for the needs of that particular church.

Not only must we understand these letters in their primary association, but secondly we must understand them in their **personal application**. These letters are written to seven literal churches but they have a personal application as well.

These letters are of personal value to every Christian because they picture the different kinds of Christians that show up in the church in every age. These letters help the church discern their own spiritual state in the sight of the Lord.

Not only must these letters be understood in their primary association and personal application, but each letter must be understood in their **prophetic anticipation**.

Most conservative pre-millennial expositors believe that the seven churches of chapters two and 3 represent the chronological development of the church viewed spiritually.

So that Ephesus is characteristic of the apostolic church in the early days and the church of Laodicea is the last church that will be on the scene before Jesus comes back. Each church represents a certain age in the life of the church ending with the Laodicean age which I believe we are currently living in.

At the end of our messages on the seven churches I will give a message on the prophetic view of the churches.

Now, with those brief introductory remarks lets delve into our study tonight of the church at Ephesus and, "What To Do When The Glow Is Gone."

Revelation 2:1-7

1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

*⁴ Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee,
because thou hast left thy first love.*

*⁵ Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen,
and repent, and do the first works; or else I
will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy
candlestick out of his place, except thou
repent.*

*⁶ But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds
of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.*

*⁷ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the
Spirit saith unto 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. (KJV)*

Now, I want you to notice the characteristics of this church here. And, as look at this church tonight you're going to see that it seems to be a very wonderful church, but it has a very fatal flaw.

I. The Church's Program

Now, the first thing I want you to notice is their program. You talk about a church with a program! It had a wonderful program.

A. They were a Going Church

Jesus is speaking to this church, and He says, in Verse 2:

Revelation 2:2 ² *I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: (KJV)*

Do you see that? Oh, they were a going church. They were, "A going church for a coming Lord." They believed in the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they were very busy about doing good works.

Sometimes we preach so much that we're saved by grace through faith and that we're not saved by works, some people almost believe that we don't believe in doing good works.

Our Lord takes record of all of the good works that we do, but works are *not the root of salvation; they are the fruit of salvation. Works are not the cause of salvation; works are the consequence of salvation. Works don't get us to Heaven; works follow us to Heaven.* We need to understand that. And so, our Lord looked at this church, and the first thing He said: "*I know your works...*"

B. They were a Working Church

And then, He says, "*I know...your labor,...*" Look, if you will please, in Verse 2. Now, this word can be translated, "toil," and that means that's the price of the works.

This speaks of the perspiration; this speaks of the hard work. There's no cheap way; there's no easy way; there's no lazy way to serve the Lord Jesus.

He says, "I know your works, and I know what those works cost you. I know your labor. I know the blood, sweat, and tears that you have put into your church and your work for Christ."

You know what the deacon's prayer is, don't you? "Now I lay me down to sleep. The sermon's long; the subject's deep. If he should quit before I wake, give me a nudge, for goodness sake."

Now, there are a lot of deacons like that, a lot of Sunday School teachers like that— just simply asleep. Not this church. Brother, they were a going church. They were a working church.

Jesus said of this church, "I know your work." And, He said, "I know the toil—I know the labor—that it costs."

And again, I want to say, dear friend, if we want Victory to be the church that it ought to be, that Jesus wants it to be, there is some work involved and there's some labor connected with that work.

II. The Church's Purity

Now, notice, secondly, not only their program, but our Lord also knew their purity. Notice He says in Verse 2:

Revelation 2:2 ² I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: (KJV)

Here was a church that held a very high standard of morality, and spirituality, and purity. They were pure in their living. And, the Bible says they could not bear those that are evil. That means that moral worldlings did not find themselves at home in this church. Dr. Vance Havner said, "The temperature was so high that he killed the germs."

There was such a spiritual fellowship, and so forth, that people who didn't want to live right and do right were not comfortable.

Now, I studied the New Testament and the tone of the New Testament—I don't believe that every time a person committed a sin they were put out of this church or any other church. That wasn't God's plan. God's plan was not to put them out, but to nurture them, to pray over them, to restore them. Galatians 6:1 still says,

Galatians 6:1 1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. (KJV)

But, I take this to mean that, in this church at Ephesus, these double-tongued, double-dealing moral worldlings were not given places of leadership. They were not the ones who set the standards. They may have been ministered to, but they did not lead; they did not control this church.

This church was a church that had a high spiritual standard. And, they refused leadership and fellowship to those who were open and flagrant sinners. And so, our Lord knew their program. Our Lord knew their purity.

III. The Church's Proclamation

And also, our Lord knew their proclamation. Look again in Verse 2:

Revelation 2:2 ² I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: (KJV)

Here was a church—not only that held a high standard of morality, but here was a church that was orthodox, and doctrinally straight, and doctrinally pure. They refused to let false teachers poison the fellowship.

And, someone has said that, "A true church, a New Testament church, has a right to screen out the bugs, when it lets in the light." That's what this church was doing—screening out those teachers who did not take a stand.

There were some who came to the church at Ephesus and said, "We'd like to teach in your Sunday School; we'd like to lead in your Church Training," if they had such a thing, or whatever they had.

And, they said, "Well now, first of all, before we're going to let you teach—you claim to be an apostle; that is, one sent from Heaven—before we let you teach, we're going to examine you; we're going to find out what you believe.

And, if you're not straight, if you're not right, you're not going to control this church. You see, false teachers and false prophets are always trying to come into some Bible-believing church like Victory, or any other church.

As a matter of fact, Paul warned the church at Ephesus. Turn to Acts Chapter 20 and Verse 28. And, it's the same church that Paul spoke to. Paul was the one who ministered there at this church at Ephesus in such magnificent power.

And, after he had been with them for about two years, he left and then came back and gave a little report.

And, we read, in Acts Chapter 20 and Verses 28-29, this warning from the Word of God—Paul says to these elders at Ephesus,

Acts 20:28-29 ²⁸ Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

²⁹ For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. (KJV)

What a warning! Paul said, "You feed the flock; you build them up in the Word, because when I get away from you, and when I'm no longer here..." He knew the tactics of the devil. Like a wolf in sheep's clothing, grievous wolves were going to come and attack the flock. And, Paul said, "Don't you let them do it." Paul said in Acts 20:30

³⁰ Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

(KJV)

And, here was a church that would not let these wolves come in. Here was a church that tried them which said they were apostles and were not, and refused to let them teach.

Some people would have said they were not very open-minded. We don't need to be open-minded when it comes to the Word of God. We just need to simply say, "God said it; and, if you want to teach that, you're free to teach it. But, you're not free to teach it here, because we don't believe it, and we will not accept it."

Some people say, "Well, that sounds un-Christian." No, that's not un-Christian; that's just biblical. I've been amazed in America that we have lambs that are defending the wolves right to devour them. It's an amazing thing. But here, Paul said, "Wolves are going to come that will devour the flock, and I put you on warning."

So, here was a church that had a program: "*I know your works...*" Here was a church that had purity: "*...you cannot bear those who are evil...*" Here was a church that the right proclamation: "*...And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;*"

And, there was another doctrinal heresy that tried to sneak in, as we're talking about their proclamation. Look, if you will please, down in Verse 6:

Revelation 2:6 ⁶ But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate. (KJV)

Now, we're talking about their proclamation. Who were the Nicolaitans? The word *Nicolaitans* is a composite word: *Nikao*, which means, "to rule"; and *laos*, which means, "the laity."

There came, in this early church, and in the lives of the early Christians, a division between what we call the *clergy* and the *laity*—now, the *clergy*, referring to the ministers; and the *laity*, referring to the man in the pew.

And, there came a division—that is, an artificial division. It is not in the Word of God—an artificial division. We talked about the *laity* and *clergy*. We talk about just a plain member and a minister.

That distinction does not come from the Word of God. But, there arose, in the early centuries, a group of so-called *clergy*, who wanted to rule over the *laity*.

That's what this word *Nicolaitans* means—"to rule over the people." And, there came a group of demagogues in the church, who were going to rule the church.

Now, we need to be very careful here, because, on the one hand, God has never ordained priestcraft, where a certain group of people come with some sort of a ecclesiastical hierarchy to lord it over God's flock. But, there's another distortion that's just as bad we're going to see later on—the church of the Laodiceans.

And, *Laodicean* means, "where the people ruled, where people say, 'This is a Baptist Church. We'll do what we want.'" The rule of the people is just as bad as the rule of the clergy. In a New Testament church, Jesus is to rule. He is the head of the Church.

Now, this doesn't mean that He doesn't have His called pastors, who are to lead the church. And, this doesn't mean that the pastor is not to have leadership and a certain amount of spiritual authority. But, there is to be no division between clergy and laity. It took just as much of the blood of Jesus to save me as it did you, and to save you as it did me.

You say, "Well, Pastor Stovall, that's wonderful. You're coming down to our level." Oh no, I'm not. I'm bringing you up to my level. Now, you pay attention to what I am saying, friend.

I'm not the only minister in this church. We're all to be ministers. God called you to minister. You say, "No, that's what we pay you for." No, you don't. You don't pay me.

You give your money to God. God pays me. What I mean by that is this: You can't hire me to serve Jesus for you.

Do you understand what I'm saying? I'm not trying to be arrogant about it. But, you can't say, "Now, I'm going to pay you to do my praying. I'm going to pay you to do my soul winning. I'm going to pay you to be merciful." That can't be done, ladies and gentlemen. I'm bringing you up to this level. I'm not coming down to that level.

Sometimes we say to a minister, "Well, he left this church and went to that church. I suppose they're going to give him a bigger salary, and that's why he's leaving." Oh, that's such a cruel thing, if you were ever to say that about a minister, who is a man of God.

But, how many men, women, boys, and girls in this congregation, if they were to get orders from headquarters, "We're going to raise your salary 20,000 dollars, but we're going to move you to St. Louis," you'd just say, "Well, wife, it's all settled—we're getting a 20,000-dollar-a-year raise; we're going to St. Louis. Hasn't God blessed us?"

You wouldn't think to pray about it; you wouldn't try to find out whether it was God's will—whether God wanted you to go, or whether... You'd just simply say, "More money? I'm going." Well, now wait a minute.

You have no right to do that. It takes just as much of the blood of Jesus to save you as it did me. We're all in this thing together. We belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. And, you must pray, and you must say, "It's not my life, not my will. It's Your will, Lord. What is it, Lord, You want me to do? Wherever You lead, I'll go. Whatever You want me to do, I'll do."

Here was a church, however, that could not bear this doctrine of the Nicolaitans, where the clergy ruled over the laity; and again, we're going to see later on it was not God's will for the laity to rule over the clergy, but for the Lord Jesus to rule over all.

IV. The Church's Patience

Now, here was a church—a wonderful church. We see this in their program. We see it in their purity. We see it in their proclamation. And, we also see it in their patience. Look again in Verse 3:

Revelation 2:3 ³ And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. (KJV)

It was a remarkable church because of its patience. These Ephesians had not grown weary in well doing. And, throughout opposition and persecution, they were faithful and they were full of patience and endurance.

And, this word means, "to remain under pressure and keep on going"— what the word *patience* means. It doesn't mean having the ability to thread a needle or to build some sort of a model on your family room table. No. It means, "to hold up under persecution." That's what the biblical word *patience* means.

Paul wrote, concerning the work at Ephesus, even when he was there, in 1 Corinthians Chapter 16 and Verse 9:

1 Corinthians 16:9 ⁹ *For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries. (KJV)*

There were all kinds of opposition there at Ephesus. Paul had to have that patience. Paul had to have that endurance, and so did these other Christians.

If you'll read the Book of Acts, you'll find out that Paul got into a riot there at Ephesus. There was a man named Demetrius, who was a silversmith, and who had a union of silversmiths who were making little shrines, little idols, to the goddess Diana.

And, actually, one of the Seven Wonders of the World, the Temple of Diana, was there at Ephesus.

And, Paul came in there and preached the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and people were turning from Diana to Jesus; and, no longer did they need their silver shrines.

And, it was bad for the idolatry business; and so, they drummed up some false charges against Paul, and they actually tried to put Paul in prison and do him bodily harm. Paul knew opposition. Everywhere Paul went there was either a revival, or a riot, or both. There was something about this man. He was a remarkable man of God.

And yet, these Ephesian Christians, who were there at Ephesus, were so true to the Lord Jesus Christ, so faithful. When opposition, and persecution, and threats, and bodily harm came, they kept on going on for the Lord Jesus Christ. And, you can tell the size of a Christian by what it takes to stop him. Thank God for their patience.

V. The Church's Problem

Now, you say, "Well, Pastor Stovall, what on Earth could be wrong with a church like this? I see—I see their program; I see their purity; I see their proclamation; I see their patience. What could be their problem?"

All right, let's look at their problem. And, we're going to see what their problem is, and what a problem it was, in Verse 4:

Revelation 2:4 ⁴ Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. (KJV)

And, this was their problem: They left their first love. Now, that doesn't mean they didn't love Jesus anymore. He was their first love, and they did love Him. But, they did not love Him as they used to love Him. The honeymoon—the spiritual honeymoon—was over.

And, those of you who are married, do you remember your honeymoon? Do you remember how wonderful that first love was?

Do you remember how sweet, how tender, how romantic those days were? I hope that you're still on your honeymoon. I hope your honeymoon is not over.

But, if you don't love your wife more than you did when you first got married, the chances are you love her a whole lot less.

Sometimes honeymoons don't last very long. Somebody has said, "The honeymoon is that period of time between 'I do' and 'you'd better.'"
Now, I don't know whether you have come from "I do" to "you'd better," or not. I don't know whether your honeymoon is over, or not.

Do you remember when you first got married, and you went off to work, and how she'd get up and fix you that marvelous breakfast, fix herself up before she'd let you see her in the morning, and then send you off with a big hug and a kiss? And now, she just kind of rolls over, and opens one eye, and says, "There's some coffee on, left over from last night; you can heat that up."

There was a woman whose husband was the one who was neglecting her, and he just never seemed to be romantic anymore, never seemed to be tender anymore.

And, a young married couple moved in next door, and they were so much in love—still on their honeymoon. And, she watched this young lady, as she would come to the door to send her husband off to work; and, before he'd go, he'd put his arms around her and give her a great big ole' kiss and a hug.

She watched that for several mornings; then, she brought her husband to the window. She said, "I want you to watch that. You see that, over there? You see what he's doing? Why don't you do that?" He said, "I hardly know the woman."

Well, dear friend, sometimes the honeymoon is over; sometimes that love that we had just grows cold and stale.

And, there are a lot of men who love their wives, and there are a lot of wives who love their husbands—but you just don't love with the love that you first had—that reckless love, that abounding love, that enthusiastic love.

Now, that was what was wrong with this church, right here. They had left their first love. It wasn't that they didn't love Jesus anymore; they just didn't love Jesus like they used to.

They were still respectable; they were still active; they were still decent; they were still orthodox; they were still growing. But, they had lost the glow, and that's what we're talking about tonight.

I wonder if you have lost the glow. I'm wondering if I'm speaking to someone here tonight who is orthodox; I'm wondering if I'm speaking to someone who is active; I'm wondering, tonight, if I'm speaking to someone here tonight who is patient, someone who is a church worker, and someone who labors for the Lord Jesus Christ—but your spiritual honeymoon is over.

You don't love Jesus like you once loved the Lord Jesus Christ. I don't know what caused this Ephesian church to lose the love that they first had for Jesus—I don't know what caused it.

A. Possible Causes of the Loss of the Glow

But, I think, perhaps, I can read between the lines just a little bit and figure out why this church didn't love the Lord like they used to.

1. Fighting Heresy

For example, one thing we notice here—it says in Verse 2

Revelation 2:2 ² I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: (KJV)

Did you know that one way that you can lose your love for the Lord Jesus, if you're not careful, is fighting heresy? Did you know that—did you know that? Did you know that there are some churches that are so orthodox...

And, there's nothing wrong with being orthodox. You ought to be orthodox. But, sometimes we get so orthodox, and we get so interested in orthodoxy, and we get so interested in fighting heresy, that we forget to love the Lord Jesus—a fundamental, Bible-believing church.

I want us never to stray. I want us to be as orthodox as Patty's pig is Irish. I want us to be a very, very orthodox church, but I want us to be careful.

There is a danger in this church, and in any church, that, when we turn our eyes upon heresy, and when we start sniffing out heresy, that we can have a warm nose and a cold heart.

We can be just as straight as a gun barrel doctrinally and just as empty spiritually. Sometimes that can happen to you, if you're not careful. You can get on the business of fighting everybody else and straightening out everybody else, and you forget to spend time on your face and on your knees with the Lord Jesus Christ, loving the Lord Jesus Christ. And, perhaps that's how they lost their first love. Perhaps they had become doctrinal detectives, rather than lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Doing Works

And, I'll tell you another way that they may have lost their first love, for the Lord Jesus said in Verse 2

Revelation 2:2 ² I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: (KJV)

Could it be that they were so busy doing things for Jesus that they failed to spend time with Jesus? Now again, don't get me wrong. Oh, you are to do works!

And, if you're born again, you will do good works. And, I'm talking about good works that cost—labor and toil. You'll do it; but oh, my dear friend, what a shame it would be, what a crime it would be, what a tragedy it would be, if what you do for Jesus keeps you from Jesus!

You know, sometimes a businessman will get very prosperous in his business, and his business demands more and more of his time.

And, there's his wife; and there is his family; and there are his children. And now, the man who used to make 40,000 or 50,000 dollars a year is now making 100,000 or 200,000. So, he says to his wife, "Why, the things that you've wanted, you can have.

Here's a beautiful home; and here are some clothes; and here is an automobile; and here, we're going to send the children to a fine college, and we're going to do it all. But, that woman has a sad look on her face. Something is happening to the marriage, and she can't figure out what it is.

But, he's spending so much time doing things for her that he doesn't spend any time with her, just loving her. And, she looks back with an empty heart and remembers those times when they didn't have very much—just some homemade furniture and a few little things—but they spent time together.

Oh, wouldn't it be a shame if our spiritual success in this church, and our going, and our business were to draw away the time that our dear Lord Jesus wants us to spend right at His feet?

Do you remember the story in the Bible of Mary and Martha—how Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, and Meatloaf Martha was in the kitchen cooking and doing all of these things? And, I don't put that down, and I thank God for the Martha types who have a spirit of service. But, Ms. Martha, you'd better learn how to spend sometime sitting at Jesus' feet—the most sacred place on the face of this earth.

I'm not asking you, tonight, "Do you love the Lord Jesus?" If you're a Christian, I know you love the Lord Jesus. What I'm asking you tonight is, "Do you love Him with that first love?" I'm asking you tonight, Mr. Orthodox Christian, Mr. Working Christian, Mr. Patient Christian—I'm asking you tonight, "Do you love Jesus with a burning, blazing, passionate, emotional love? Do you have that kind of love for the Lord Jesus?"

That's what Jesus wants out of you more than anything else. Jesus wants your heart. If you give Him your money, He's no richer. If you give Him your scholarship, He is no smarter. If you give Him your labor, He is no better off. He has it all. The one thing He really desires from you is your love. But, thank God that's the one thing you can do.

Others may have given more money in the offering than you could give. Others may be able to pray better than you can pray. Others may be able to preach more than you can preach. Others may be able to attend more times than you can attend. But, nobody can love Jesus more than you.

You can love Jesus all you want. Isn't that wonderful? Isn't that glorious? And, that's the one thing He wants. Do you know what the first and great commandment is? Mark 12:30 says,

Mark 12:30 ³⁰ And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. (KJV)

So, therefore, the greatest sin is not to love Him, because that is the greatest commandment—to love Him.

And, our Lord, with a tear-stained face, looked at this church and said, "You're doing so many wonderful things, but I have one thing against you: You have left your first love."

B. Problems that Would be Solved if We Just Loved Jesus

Think of the problems that would be solved in our churches, if we just loved Jesus.

1. The Attendance Problem

The attendance problem would be solved. People wouldn't have to be begged to attend church, because where the hearts are, the heels would follow.

2. The Financial Problem

The financial problem would be solved. Dear friend, you don't have to beg people to give to someone they love. How many of you have not purchased for your wife or for your husband something that you really couldn't afford, but you bought it anyway just because you love them?

You know, I'm always amazed at these people who say, "Well, in my business, it's hard for me to figure out how much I tithe, because I don't get a regular salary. It's just kind of hard for me to figure out the tithe."

"Buddy, if it were coming to you, you'd figure it out. I mean, if the shoe was on the other foot, if the tithe were coming to you, you'd get your pencil and you'd say, 'Yea, I believe I'm due so much.' You'd be able to figure it out." The reason that people don't give is they just don't love the Lord Jesus as they ought to love Him.

3. The Service Problem

Why, the service problem—and serving Jesus, and having Sunday School teachers and nursery workers—that wouldn't be any problem, if people just loved the Lord Jesus. Do you think a mother has to be begged at night to sit up at night with her sick child? Of course not! That mother loves that child, and she doesn't have to be begged to do something.

4. The Evangelism Problem

The evangelism problem would be solved, for Jesus said in John 21:17

John 21:17 ¹⁷ He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. (KJV)

He didn't say, "Do you love sheep?" or, "Do you love to feed sheep?" "Do you love Me?—Do you love Me? You'll feed my sheep."

5. The Problem of Church Arguments

And, church arguments would be solved, if we loved the Lord Jesus, because we cannot desperately love Jesus and not love one another.

Oh, let me tell you, ladies and gentlemen: He wants, primarily, your love. Someone has well said, "Life holds few things more bitter than the tragedy of unrequited love"—"life holds few things more bitter than the tragedy of unrequited love." And so, we see their problem right here in Verse 4. They had left their first love.

VI. The Church's Prescription

Now, let us move on to Verse 5. And, I want you to see their prescription—what God said to do when the glow is gone. What is the prescription? Revelation 2:5 says,

Revelation 2:5 ⁵ Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

(KJV)

And, here are three R's that our Lord gave to this church:

A. Remember

The first is *remember*. Look at it again:

Revelation 2:5 ⁵ Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. (KJV)

I want you to think back, right now. I want you to take a trip back in your mind. I want you to take a spiritual journey in your mind through your spiritual pilgrimage.

And, I want to ask you this question—are you ready for it? Was there ever a time in your life—are you listening?—was there ever a time in your life when you loved the Lord Jesus more than you do at this moment? Was there?

If there was, you, my friend, are a backslider. Was there ever a time when you loved Jesus more? Jesus says, "Remember." Do you remember those first days? Oh, dear friend, if you don't love Him now with that burning, glowing enthusiasm, you need to remember what it used to be.

The songwriter said,
Where is the blessedness I knew,
When I first saw the Lord?
Where is the soul refreshing view
Of Jesus and His Word?
What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill. (William Cowper)

Where is that blessedness—where is that blessedness—you once knew? Our Lord says, "Remember."

B. Repent

And then, the second thing He says is, "Repent."
Look again in verse 5:

Revelation 2:5 ⁵ Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. (KJV)

That's the second R. You see, this lack of love for the Lord Jesus is a terrible, horrible, hateful, heinous, hurtful, sin. I've said before—that the greatest commandment is to love God; and, therefore, the greatest sin is not to love the Lord Jesus.

And, when our Lord told us to repent, He meant that you can do something about it. Don't get the idea that it's kind of like the love bug hit you, and you fall in love and out of love with Jesus. You don't fall in love with Jesus, and you don't fall out of love with Jesus. You choose to love Jesus.

The love of God is not that sentimental. It has spiritual concrete and steel in it. If you don't love the Lord Jesus, it's because there's sin in your life. And, you need to repent of it; you need to get on your face before Him and say, "God, I deplore this sin. I turn from it. I repent."

C. Repeat

And then, not only does He tell them to remember, and to repent, but the third thing that He tells them to do is to repeat. Look, if you will please, again, in Verse 5:

Revelation 2:5 ⁵ Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. (KJV)

Go back to that time where you used to be. Now, we keep telling people, "You need to go on, and on, and on."

But here, our Lord says, "You need to go back. You need to turn back." We need to go back—go back to the first works, just go back to that simple childlike faith you had in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said in Matthew 18:3

Matthew 18:3 ³ And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. (KJV)

We need to go back to that simple faith, that childlike faith, that glad, reckless, enthusiastic love for the Lord Jesus.

In Conclusion

I want to ask you one more time: Was there ever a time—was there ever a time—when you loved Jesus more than you do right now? Have you gotten so busy doing things for Him that you just fail to love Him?

Oh, the Son of God is hearing me preaching, saying to you, "Give Me your heart. Love Me. I want—more than anything else—your love." O God, help us that we might remember, that we might repent, and that we might return and repeat the first works.