

Return to Me!

Revelation 2:1-7 ¹“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. ⁴ 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. 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.’

We are not through with Corinthians...

❖ Introduction

➤ Return to ME!

- He is saying this to me, and to you.
- If we are astrayHe wants us to return to Him.
- And I believe this message to be mainly to Christians, yet if you do not know Him, He wants your heart also.

➤ Personal

- Lets make this personal this morning....
- If Jesus was to send us a letter, what would He write in it?

❖ 2 Things to Notice Here

- We will start with two things
- **These verses are written to the church as a whole in Revelation**
- **These verses are written to the individual**
 - Go it?
 - Repeat.
- **So what John wrote is for the church, and for you as an individual**
 - If you and I fail to see that God is writing these things to us in particular
 - We will never move
 - We will never act in accordance to how God would have us act.
 - We will never return to Him

“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.

❖ Who is Writing Here

- Jesus is really....through John
- And He is telling them who He is:
 - He is the one who holds the seven stars in his Right Hand

- He walks amongst the seven golden lampstands
- He is saying he is holding the messengers, which is referring to the pastor/elder/leader of the church in His hand.
- He is also saying He is walking amongst the churches.

➤ **This is nothing new.**

- We have stated this before...a number of times.
- But you need to understand this.
- HE is wanting them to know He sees all we do

➤ **HE knows**

- What we do
- How we do it
- Why we do it
- When we do it
 - Scriptures teach us the Christ is all knowing.
 - And He has been given all power to judge
 - And nothing is hidden from His sight
 - Rather it is all laid naked before His eyes.

❖ **Christ's Introduction**

➤ **Why does He introduce Himself this way to this church.... (does in different ways to other churches)**

- Because the nature of this church, they needed to know this specific detail about Jesus...
- Needed to understand this Characteristic of their Savior....

➤ **As we get into these verses you will see....**

- It was important for this church to know that despite their works
- And despite their theology....
- Jesus was still walking among them, and knew all they were doing...

“ 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.

❖ **Commendation**

- He starts with commending them for what they have done
- **This way for this church and any church**
 - There are some good things, and some bad things
- **Same way for individuals in this church, including myself**
 - Some good things, and some bad things.
- **I try to look at the good things in people and things.**
 - If you look hard enough you will find something good
 - But, it normally does not take us too long to find something negative

➤ **BUT.**

- Jesus is not satisfied AT ALL with this being the way things stay.
- There is no excuse for it.
- And you will see how stern He is toward them.

- Our call is one of Holiness and perfection
 - “Be ye holy as your father in heaven is holy”
 - How shall we who have died to sin, sin any longer
- Says a number good things about them (THESE ARE ALL GOOD THINGS< WE SHOULD PATTERN OUR LIFE AFTER...
 - Because they are pleasing to Christ.
 - Sees their deeds
 - Then He goes into them
 - Their Toil
 - Labored almost to the point of exhaustion for Him
 - They went all out for God in their works
 - Perseverance
 - They were patient even during very trying times.
 - They did not tolerate evil men
 - They did not like sin
 - They wanted it to have no part in their church
 - Found out false apostles
 - Some claimed to be, but they tested the spirits to see they were not.
 - They did all this for His name sake..
 - And they had not grown weary in this, they did not get tired from it.

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.

❖ Something Against them

- Abandoned their First love
 - Christians can get off course a little from time to time.
 - But this is not something to say flippantly, neither is it something we should get used to, it is not the norm for believers.
 - We should never be ho-hum about this.
 - About ourselves, or about others.
- What is abandoning your first love?
 - This was a very FATAL FLAW...because it could kill their church
 - They had kept their doctrinal purity...
 - This is the same group of people Paul wrote to 40 years earlier
 - ◆ In Eph 1 Paul said he had heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus, and their love towards one another.
 - Losing your first love can come from
 - 1) Losing affection for Christ
 - 2) A Lack of love for the Brethern
 - 3) A lack of love for the lost

- 4) Rise of sin in your life
 - ◆ If we let it sit, and feed it occasionally, it will never leave us alone...
 - ◆ The more we play with it, the further we are from being free from it.
- **This church was continuing to carry out Christian responsibilities, but with a weakening love for Christ and others.**
 - **They were going through the motions.**
 - ◆ 1) Some just did things cause they were expected to.
 - ◆ 2) Others did things cause everyone else did them
 - ◆ 3) Many made sure doctrine was right, but forgot to love those they corrected
 - ◆ 4) On the outside they looked sound to themselves
 - ◆ 5) But Jesus saw that the structure was weak.
- **The WHOLE reason we do things, or are supposed to do them, is because of our Love for God and others.**
 - When we fulfill those 2 commands to Love God, and Love People, we can not go wrong.
- **Israel faced this same problem**
 - **God tells them Through Jeremiah in Jer 2**
 - ◆ He remembered their love for him in the youth of the nations
 - ◆ They followed him relentlessly, and faithfully
 - ◆ They were devoted and Holy unto the Lord
 - ◆ THEN they began to seek other idols, other gods that do not exist
 - ◆ They defiled His land
 - ◆ He even warned them through prophets, but they did not listen
 - “For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.”
 - They forsook God, and got someone to replace him...
 - Something, that could not give them life....
- **How else can we get off track?**
 - I have no idea where you personally need to return from. There are other areas besides a lack of love that push us from where we should be
 - ◆ But this is for sure a starting point to lead us into greater sin.
 - **Corinth got off track**
 - ◆ 2 Corinthians 12:20-21 ²⁰ For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish—that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. ²¹ I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and sensuality that they have practiced.
 - Bitterness can creep in
 - Quarrelling can occur
 - Jealousy
 - Anger
 - Hostility

- Slander
- Gossip
- Conceit
- Disorder
- Sexual immorality

➤ John MacArthur writes “they opened the doors to spiritual apathy, indifference to others, love for the world, compromise with evil, judgment, and, ultimately, the death of the church altogether. Despite its outwardly robust appearance, a deadly spiritual cancer was growing at the heart of the Ephesian church.

❖ Tells them how to return

➤ Remember

- Look to the word for guidance in all things we must do to honor God
- Think back to the zeal and desire you had for Christ at conversion

➤ Repent - REPENT

- Means to change your mind..... To have regret...
 - One Definition uses the word: Prostrate.... Bow down before God...
- Turn from whatever sin you may have
- Turn your back on it...Confess it to Christ, and ask His help in removal of it

➤ Do (ACTIVE)

- Do not just admit to the wrongs, but actively change things.
 - Do not be a hearer only...but be a doer....
 - Actively do the things the Bible teaches us to do.

➤ Aid of the Holy Spirit...

- You will never conquer without His help...

❖ The Consequences

- **REMEMBER... A person can be doing good things yet still not be where God wants him to be.**

➤ **If not, I will come to you and REMOVE your lampstand from its place.**

- This may not be very popular to think about, but it is a possibility. For this church and any other church.

➤ **This is an incredible thing He says.**

- And He says it to only this church.
- **ONLY THIS CHURCH.**

➤ **This church is not that bad, it seems**

- They had A LOT going for them
- But this one thing is enough for Him to say this.

➤ **I have always found it very interesting that He puts this to the church at Ephesus and not**

- **Laodicea – whom he offers no commendation**
- **Or Pergamum – whom he says hold to the teachings balaam, and some to the teachings of the Nicolations.**
- **Or Thyatira – who he says tolerate the woman Jezebel**
- **Or Sardis – whom he says he did not find their works complete.**

➤ **But to this church that “only” Left its first love.**

- Leaving your devotion to Christ must be a very serious problem
- Maybe He says this to them because, this is where it all starts,
- this is the seed that leads to all other sins.
 - A preventative measure is to stay close to Christ.

❖ Return to Christ

➤ **Make every effort to return.**

➤ **There are commands to return and examples in the scriptures.**

- There have always been calls from God to return to Him.
- Sometimes people would turn back, yet at other times they would not.
- These examples, although in the past give us a clear idea of the heart of God toward our disobedience.
- Look at the call to return, look at what they do, and then look at the results.
 - ◆ **God is not mocked, whatsoever a man sows, he will also reap.**
- **1 Samuel 7:3-4³ And Samuel said to all the house of Israel, "If you are returning to the LORD with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroah from among you and direct your heart to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines."⁴ So the people of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtaroah, and they served the LORD only.**
 - HE tells them to return
 - They do
 - And He delivers them
- **Isaiah 55:7⁷ let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.**
 - If you had heard this message in its day, what would you have done?
 - ◆ Returned to God?
 - ◆ Israel did not, they were still stubborn and followed after their own desires.
 - ◆ Isaiah already knew this:
 - God allowed their nation to be destroyed, burned to the ground
 - Let us not do the same.
 - Let us teach others to not do the same.

❖ What will YOU do

- Will you continue to look to your brother and wonder why they will not repent
- Will you continue to look to your sister here and wonder why they do not return.
- Or will you take this personally and place the responsibility of repentance on your own self.
 - **Matthew 3:8⁸ Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.**

❖ I do not know what you have going on

- I do not know who needs to turn from what
- But it is clear from the word of God we must return to Him
- You know your conscience, your heart
 - **Although it is wicked, we must search it...**
 - The Spirit reveals the truth of our own self to Him.

❖ The Great thing is: **Explain this Good!**

- **We serve a GRACIOUS and wonderful God.**

- He is willing to forgive, and to pardon
- The desire of God is to forgive. That is part of His nature.
- **He wants desperately to be gracious to us.**
 - I know even with my son at such a young age, I will tell Him He will be rewarded if He acts right.
 - And when He does not, either out of disobedience, or a lack of understanding
 - I have to be true to my word, so He will learn for the next time.
 - **BUT...**
 - I hate to withhold that good thing from Him
 - I hate to see him truly upset, and having his feelings hurt.
- **God wants good for you today...**
 - He wants good things for you spiritually
 - Why do we continue to wallow in the mud with the pigs, and eat of their food spiritually...
 - When we can come and eat and drink of Him freely, and wonderfully.

❖ Consider

- **What would He say to our church?**
 - Holy lifestyle...no lust,etc
 - Would He say we are sacrificial in our giving?
 - Would He say we are standing up for the word in our community?
 - Would He say we are taking the gospel out to all those around us?
 - Would He be pleased at our devotion to the Lord. PRAYER>>>THE WORD
- **What manner of rebuke would we receive.**
 - I think many of us know.
 - A Church is a Church, a Body of Believers for a reasons...
 - All the parts need to be working, or it does not function as well..
- **Thankful to God...**
 - For His Faithfulness in my unfaithfulness...
 - Even though I stumble, I thank Him so much for stirring me back to Him...Not letting me get to far from Him before He takes that Shepherd staff and pulls me back.

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.'

❖ The Conqueror Gets Life

- Tree of Life.... Means we live forever....

❖ Invitation

- To all here, to return to Christ
- So many of us have done things from A-Z...
- Only you know yourself... Only you know if your conscience is right before God.
- I know one thing... It is far better to get it right with Him now, then when we see Him face to face.