

# **First Things First**

## **Revelation 2:1-7: *Letter to the Church in Ephesus***

***Thought for the Day:*** Because of what Jesus Christ did for us in His sacrifice on the cross, we should choose to make Him the supreme love of our lives.

The church in Ephesus was “almost perfect.” But it had one serious defect—it had a problem with priorities. This problem was so severe, the Lord threatened to remove the testimony and spiritual impact of the church. In light of what Christ did for us on the cross, we need to examine our priorities and make sure that our love for the Lord has not grown cold.

### **I. The Greeting (2:1)**

#### **A. The Addressee**

**1 "To the angel of the church... - the pastor, the primary messenger of God's Word.  
...in Ephesus write:** – a city known for its immorality and idolatry.

#### **B. The Sender**

**'The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand who walks among the seven golden lampstands.'**

- The Lord knows each pastor and church intimately. He is sovereign – He exercises absolute authority, power and control over all the pastors and churches.
- He knows, with absolute certainty, what our priorities are!

### **II. The Commendation (2:2-3, 6)**

#### **A. They were hard working and persevering**

**2 "I know your works, your toil (labor to the point of exhaustion) and your patient endurance...**

**3 I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary.** – They were bearing up in the face of severe persecution.

#### **B. They were spiritually discerning and uncompromising**

**...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.**

- They were intolerant of evil people in the church; they didn't allow sin in their midst to go unopposed.
- They were able to use the Scriptures to discern who was teaching and living according to the truth and who was not.

**6 Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.**

- The Nicolaitans were compromising the truth of God's Word and joining in the evil practices of the culture around them, especially the sins of immorality and idolatry.
- Compromise with the world, conforming to the behaviors of the world, is not pleasing to the Lord. (Romans 12:1-2; James 4:4)

### **III. The Condemnation (2:4)**

#### **4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.**

- "What is 'first love'? It is the [pure, simple] devotion to Christ that so often characterizes the new believer: fervent, personal, uninhibited, excited, and openly displayed." (*Warren Wiersbe, Be Victorious, p. 35*)
- "Just think of it: It is possible to serve, sacrifice, and suffer 'for my name's sake' and yet not really love Jesus Christ! The Ephesian believers were so busy maintaining their separation that they were neglecting adoration. Labor is no substitute for love; neither is purity a substitute for passion. The church [and each of us as individuals] must have both [labor and love, purity and passion] if we are to please Him... It is only as we love Christ fervently that we can serve Him faithfully. Our love for Him must be pure." (*Wiersbe, ibid, p. 36*)
- Abandon – "to release, let go, leave behind." (*Charles Swindoll, Letters to Churches... Then and Now, p. 6*)
- The believers focused on their work and service *for* the Lord but neglected their relationship *with* the Lord until finally, their love grew cold.
- Our relationship with God requires diligent effort; otherwise, like the believers in Ephesus, our love for the Lord will grow cold because of neglect.

#### **What can cause our love for the Lord to grow cold?**

- **Love for the world** – 1 John 2:15-27
- **Love of pleasure** – 2 Timothy 3:4
- **Love of family** – Matthew 10:34-37
- **Love of self** – Matthew 10:38-39
- **Increase of lawlessness** – Matthew 24:12-13

#### **Why should we choose to make Jesus Christ the supreme love of our lives?**

- **Because He created us for a love relationship with Himself** – Matthew 22:35-40; Mark 12:28-31.
- **Because He showed His love for us by dying on the cross to save us from our sins** – 1 John 4:19; Romans 5:8; John 3:16-18.