

Sermon Discussion 18 April 2021

Read Revelation 2:1-7

Dig Deeper

Of the seven cities to which Christ directed His messages, the church in Ephesus had by far the richest history. The **Apostle Paul** founded the Ephesian church during a brief visit there at the end of his second missionary journey, approximately 52 A.D. After Paul left Ephesus, he sent his trusted protégé **Timothy** to pastor the church there. During his imprisonments in Rome, Paul wrote an important letter to the Ephesians and also wrote two letters of encouragement to young Timothy. All three letters are a part of our New Testament canon.

Historians believe that sometime after Timothy's tenure, the **Apostle John** was brought to Ephesus as pastor. John evidently still was serving in that capacity when he was exiled to Patmos. So when Christ tells John to address this first message to the church in Ephesus, we can imagine that his heart began to pound. *Had his congregation remained faithful? What would Christ have to say about the church that was so dear to his heart?*

The Greek word translated "*forsaken*" in verse 4 indicates **gradual erosion**. The Ephesians were serving Jesus as a habit rather than out of fervent love for their Saviour. Many commentators, however, take the first love as a reference to the Ephesians' love for one another. Yet the emphasis in all these letters on the congregations' allegiance to Jesus Christ seems to favour the view that love for Him is in view.

1. When was the last time that you received a formal evaluation of your work? Was it a pleasant experience? Why, or why not? Did you feel that your evaluator was qualified to understand the challenges that you faced? Did he/she know you, personally? Imagine being evaluated by One from Whom nothing was hidden.
2. In each of the seven messages, Christ identifies Himself in a unique way, usually using a relevant phrase from John's vision of Christ in Chapter 1. How does he describe Himself to the church in Ephesus? Why do you think Christ used this particular descriptive phrase to introduce Himself to the church at Ephesus?
3. Christ knows all about our church as well, and He is constantly, lovingly evaluating it. How would we stack up in the areas of serving faithfully, enduring hardship, and having sound doctrine?
4. What are some life experiences that could contribute to our losing our first love for Christ? What are some disciplines or safeguards that we could put in place to prevent us from losing our first love? How could our Christian "activities" contribute to the erosion of our first love?

Application & Prayer

- Take a few minutes to quietly remember that time in your life when you first entered into a relationship to Christ. Think back to that time when you first realized how much He loved you, when it really dawned on you that He had demonstrated His love for you on the Cross, accepting the full penalty for your sins. What words or phrases would you use to describe your love for Him at that time?
- Spend some time in prayer. Ask God to expose anything that you may be putting before you love for Him.
- Meditate on this: *“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.”* Revelation 2:7