



World Christian Fellowship

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Seven Churches

Ephesus Church- Loving Jesus Christ

Revelation 2:1-7, *“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: ²“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; ³and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary. ⁴Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. ⁵Remember 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. ⁶But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷“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.”’*

Letter to Ephesus is known for the single statement that is made in verse 4.

“But I have this against you that you have left your first love.”

We can call this church that the church left its first love. Not necessarily in total but certainly in part.

Loving the Lord Jesus Christ is at the very core of a saving relationship to Him.

Matthew 10:37-38, *He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸ And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.*

Being worthy of Christ means loving Him to the point where you are willing to take up your cross!

Die to self becomes essential because of the demands and the compulsions of that love.

John 8:42, *Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me.*

Knowing God and being a Christian involves loving the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 14:21, *He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."*

John 14:23, *Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him*

Jesus asking Peter three times in John 21.

John 21:15,

John 21:16,

John 21:17,

Peter, do you love Me?

Those who are Christians love the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 16:22, *If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come!*

People who do not love Christ are the accursed, the damned.

Peter reminds us.

1 Peter 1:8, *whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,*

Love for the Lord Jesus Christ is present in all Christians, but it does fluctuate in its intensity. All Christians do not love the Lord Jesus Christ with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength as they ought to.

There is unquestionably a fluctuation potential in that love relationship. No better illustration of the seriousness of a

waning intensity of love than this letter to the church at Ephesus.

Now the first church then to which a letter is addressed is Ephesus. It is one of seven churches in the province of Asia Minor.

Every letter we will see in this order.

- **Commendation**
- **Concern**
- **Command**
- **Counsel**

Author:

Who is the writer?

He is not named by name, but it is very evident Jesus is the author.

This letter is sent to the angel of the church in Ephesus. The angel refers to the leader of the church. We have no reason to assume that it refers to an actual angel.

The word '*angelos*' can also mean messenger.

The writer of this letter is not really John. He may be the one whose pen moves as it were on the scroll.

V1, *“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:*

Revelation 1:12-13, *Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands,¹³ and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.*

Revelation 1:20, *The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.*

So, it is the Lord who controls the leadership of the church.

The identification of the writer is the Lord Jesus Christ. These are letters directly from Christ to the churches.

He walks among the golden lampstands.

What does it mean?

- Scrutinizing,
- examining,
- looking,
- seeing,
- assessing, and

➤ evaluating.

The One who is in charge of the church is about to write. Our head, the Lord Jesus Christ, He is the correspondent. He is the one who actually writes the letter.

“the church in Ephesus.”

Spiritually strong church founded and taught by the Apostle Paul and other apostles who followed him.

Aquila and Priscilla, who had been left there by Paul, did some preliminary foundation work.

Apollos had had some influence on that church.

This church was born in an unbelievable time miracle, powerful preaching, the Word spread. Other churches were founded, people turning from idols, turning from the occult, magic, evil practices, burning their magic books of huge values.

So, this church was born in a great revival. But by now Paul is gone. It is been about 40 years since he wrote the letter to the Ephesians.

There is a new letter coming to him and the one who brings it really is John, the one who writes it is Christ.

The commendation

It is the pattern of these letters that Christ first of all gives a commendation, and then a condemnation.

It's almost as if He sets them up and then sort of knocks them off.

V 2, *"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;*

V 6, *But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*

"I know your deeds" – or your work, your labour.

The risen Christ is praising them for labour to the point of sweat and exhaustion. You work hard!

This is the kind of toil which takes everything of mind and muscle that a man or a woman can put into it. Their labour for Christ was with major effort. They were toilers.

They weren't the kind of Christians who wanted the box seats. They weren't the kind of Christians who wanted to be entertained. They wanted to be involved. They didn't want to just eat the fruit of the harvest, they were willing to plough, plant, and do the harvest.

They were teaching, sharing Christ, planting, helping people in need. They were aggressive; they were active.

“I know your ... perseverance.”

I know your endurance, or I know your patience. Courageously accepting hardship, suffering, loss and turns it in to grace and glory.

You are sticking with it or staying with it. Even though they were beaten down and cast out, they endured it. They remained faithful. They hung on.

“I know ... you cannot endure evil men.”

I know your suppression of evil.

You are intolerant of sin.

You still have a holy standard.

They were characterized by service, steadfastness, and sanctification.

They had not lost their sensitivity to sin. You cannot endure evil men. They were probably engaged in church discipline.

Ephesians 4:27, *nor give place to the devil.*

They really hadn't.

They resented evil.

They resented evil doers.

Please notice, he doesn't say you can't endure evil. He says you can't endure evil men.

Sometimes you hear people in a well-meaning say something like, God hates the sin but loves the sinner.

Psalm 5:5, *The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity.*

God not only hates the sin, but God hates the sinner.

“Jacob have I loved; Esau have I hated.”

Ephesus church not only hated the sin, but they had a holy aversion to the sinner, for he is inextricably bound up in his sin.

God of course, also loves the sinner, and that's the wondrous balance of it.

They hated all that was morally bad. They hated the people that were morally bad with a holy righteous hatred. They knew that a little leaven would leaven the whole lump.

Paul once warned them about this on that trip to Jerusalem when he stopped to meet the elders.

Acts 20:29, *For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.*

Paul said for three years night and day with tears I have been warning you. That did go well with good results.

Here we are 40 years later, they are still holding, and they are still hating evil and evil men. They took the word from Paul and they applied it. A whole new generation still faithful to that kind of aversion to evil.

“You put to the test those who call themselves apostles and they are not and you found them to be false.”

You put them to a test and the test must have been the right test because it gave the right conclusion. You have known by your doctrine how to evaluate somebody who says he is a teacher. Many an evil man has come into a little congregation and sown error, that error has ripped and torn a church to shreds.

Jesus warned about false prophets.

Still knows how to evaluate a teacher and how to put him to the test.

Surely, they got all kinds of evil men coming in and teaching falsely.

Surely, they got all kinds of false apostles, as they are called here, emissaries of legalism or libertinism or ritualism or professionalism.

But they had the standard of sound doctrine to measure them and their measurements were correct, and so they made the right evaluation.

Only those teachers were welcome who were faithful and true to the Word of God.

That is the way it has to be. The Ephesians knew it and they lived by it.

They put to the test those who called themselves apostles and they are not, and you found them to be false. They were dealing with some high-level people. They were literally claiming to be apostles and they were false.

V3, *“And you have perseverance and have endured for My namesake and have not grown weary.”*

Through all of your service, difficulties, evil and sin, false apostles that have come and gone, you have remained faithful!

You have endured it for the right reason, for My namesake!
You have done it for Me.

You are spiritual marathoners. For all these years, at least 40, you fought the battle. You have stayed true and you have done it for me.

And have not grown weary.

Galatians 6:9, *And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.*

From disappointment, ingratitude, criticism, rebellion, lack of response, you can grow weary, but they hadn't.

Faithful to the Word,

Faithful to the work,

Faithful to the Lord,

Faithful to the judge people,

Faithful during the trouble.

They had never grown weary and always with the right motive of His namesake.

This is a marvellous church. This is a great church.

V 6, *But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*

Having indicted them in verses 4 and 5 seriously, He now comes back to commend them again.

They hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans which I also hate. There is no way that we can dogmatically identify the Nicolaitans. We can make some assumptions.

What are the deeds of the Nicolaitans?

What were they doing?

What was their doctrine?

There are a number of possibilities. But we find this heresy in another location.

The letter to the church at Pergamum.

Revelation 2:12, *“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, ‘These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:*

Revelation 2:14, *But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.*

Balaam, in Numbers 22 and following, Balaam came along and seduced God’s people into idolatry, and immorality. He posed as a prophet, which he was, and he came along and instead of leading people to godliness, he led them to sin, to idolatry and to immorality. That is what Balaam did.

Revelation 2:15, *Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. ¹⁶Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.*

Whatever Balaam did, the same thing was being done by the Nicolaitans.

How in the world this could ever be allowed in the church?

It was allowed in Pergamum.

In Ephesus it was not allowed. They could spot a Nicolaitan because they could test the false.

Furthermore, one of the deacons named in Acts 6 is Nicolas. Some early church writers, namely Irenaeus, say that it is this Nicolas who appeared early in the church, was made a deacon but who was a false believer, went bad, became an apostate, but because of his credential as a one-time deacon was allowed to come in and lead the church astray. And he was no different than a Balaam. He was a destroyer of the people just like Balaam was and he led them into immorality and wickedness.

So that's probably the best guess at who these people were. For sure we know that those who followed Nicolas were involved in immorality and uncleanness and they plied the church with sensual temptations.

Summary of Commendation:

Ephesus is a noble Church.

This church was hard working, toiling for the Kingdom, persevering through difficulty, unable to endure evil men.

Able to recognize false apostles, not being victimized by those who come along no matter who they are and advocate ungodly wicked, and evil living. A church of great character.

Concern:

What could be wrong in a church like this?

V 4, Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

When the Lord has something against our church, that's serious.

Such beautiful commendations but they missed the most important thing.

I am sure that when they read this in Ephesus it probably hit them like a thunder bolt. It probably shocked them. Because all those congratulations and then they are blasted with this, and I doubt that they ever even realized it.

What had happened?

This is one of the best churches, yet the clear penetrating spiritual laser vision of Christ found a fatal fault that probably

nobody else saw. Their hot hearts, that labour of passion and dedication was becoming cold.

The service had started to become mechanical.

Jeremiah 2:2-3, *“Go and cry in the hearing of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord: “I remember you, The kindness of your youth, The love of your betrothal, When you went after Me in the wilderness, In a land not sown. ³Israel was holiness to the Lord, The first fruits of His increase. All that devour him will offend; Disaster will come upon them,” says the Lord.’”*

God says, I remember the way it used to be.

Jeremiah 2:5, *Thus says the Lord: “What injustice have your fathers found in Me, That they have gone far from Me, Have followed idols, And have become idolaters?”*

I remember how it used to be and it isn't that way anymore. This is nothing new this happened to Israel.

Ezekiel 16:8-14, *“When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine,” says the Lord God. ⁹“Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil. ¹⁰I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals*

of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk. ¹¹ I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your wrists, and a chain on your neck. ¹² And I put a jewel in your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head. ¹³ Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate pastry of fine flour, honey, and oil. You were exceedingly beautiful, and succeeded to royalty. ¹⁴ Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through My splendor which I had bestowed on you," says the Lord God.

What God is saying?

I married you. You were in a season of love and I found you and I took you and I embraced you and I married you.

Ezekiel 16:15, *"But you trusted in your own beauty, played the harlot because of your fame, and poured out your harlotry on everyone passing by who would have it.*

I remember the time of your beauty.

I remember the time of your love.

I remember the time of your betrothal.

God said to Israel, I remember.

This is exactly what God's saying here.

The honeymoon ended in Israel!

The honeymoon ended in Ephesus!!

You don't love Me like you once loved Me. Your love has cooled.

The forerunner of spiritual apathy is love growing cold.

That is the forerunner of indifference.

If your husband/wife came to you some time and said, "I don't love you anymore, but nothing will change?"

Is that enough?

I will still earn a living.

I will still eat with you, sleep with you, drive with you.

I will still father/mother the children and be your husband/ wife.

Nothing will change, I just don't love you.

How would you feel?

Devastating.

Can we imagine saying that to the Lord?

Lord, I don't love You like I once did. That is gone. But I just want

You to know,

I will still come.

I will still work.

I will still sing.

I will still give.

I will still even believe the truth.

I just don't love You.

We wouldn't say that, but the Lord knows if it's true.

The command.

V 5, *“Remember therefore from where you have fallen.”*

Remember

You have got to go back and remember.

How do you remember?

By hearing again and again the exhilarating joy and testimony of transformation.

Remember from where you have fallen. Go back and remember how it used to be.

So often spiritual declension comes from forgetting.

This is a new generation in Ephesus. The first generation, for the most part, is gone. They still had the strong tradition but not the intense love.

A church if it's going to stay vital in its love for Christ has to be a maternity ward where there's the constant cry of new-born babes in Christ.

Why?

Because they continually bring us into touch with first love.

Repent!

Because to lose your first love is sin.

The decreasing intensity of your love for Christ is sin.

Lack of loving Him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength is sin.

Repent, get on your knees before God and ask Him to forgive you for that weakening love.

Repeat.

Do the deeds you did at first.

Passion and hunger for the Word of God.

The first love for His word. That is how it was when you first fell in love.

People who come to Christ, fall in love with Christ and they want to serve, and they want to tell their friends.

They want to teach.

They want to pass on what they know.

They want to sing.

They want to pray.

Those are the first things.

V 5, *“Or else I am coming to you and I will remove your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent”*

You might say that I am waiting for the second coming. But this is not His second coming.

You are a great church.

You have a great reputation.

You have a great ministry.

If you don't change, you are going to have nothing.

Unless you repent, I am going to remove the lampstand. The lampstand represents the church. I am going to take the church right out. Your church will be gone. Your church will be terminated.

Did it happen?

Yes.

200 AD the church is dead and gone.

Today there is no city and there is no church.

Ephesus is a bleak reminder of a church that didn't heed the letter and the light went somewhere else.

Counsel.

Each letter closes with some counsel.

V 7, *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."*

1. Invitation
2. Promise

The invitation:

He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches, which is God's way of saying you better listen.

You will find that at the end of each letter, all seven. You better listen. This is serious. Please listen.

The promise:

To him who overcomes I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God.

That is the promise.

Promise addressed to who?

To him who overcomes.

We will find that phrase repeatedly through these letters – to him who overcomes.

Who are the overcomers?

Believers.

John 5:4-5, *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵ Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

An overcomer is a Christian.

Jesus commended them in the beginning.

Jesus hit them hard about their sin.

Jesus told them to listen.

Jesus closes with a promise for the overcomers.

What was the promise?

V7, *“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.”* ’

That’s another way of saying I promise you heaven.

Overcomers are true Christians.

To this person, I will grant to eat of the tree of life.

The tree of life is first mentioned in **Genesis 2:9**, the source of life God put in the Garden.

It is mentioned lastly in **Revelation 22:19**, right at the very end.

The Lord is going to give us the tree of life and not take it away, but He will take it away from those who tamper with His truth. The tree of life in the Garden was on earth; the tree of life in the book of Revelation is that eternal glorious tree that speaks of life in heaven.