

## The Church at Ephesus Revelation 2:1-7

The Ephesian church had lost its love of Christ and for others

### Background

*City* - Center of commerce and religion in the area; dominated by trade guilds with their worship of Diana

*Church* - Paul planted this church; minister it though the Gospel's conquering of the demonic forces in the city; exhorted the elders to defend the faith and protect the sheep.

### Commendation

Christ commends the Ephesian church for their hard work and patient endurance in their opposition of three groups of evildoers: false apostles, the Nicolaitians, and the trade guilds.

*False Teachers* - Defended the faith and the church from those who claimed to be apostles.

*Nicolaitians* - They were characterized by immorality, participation in eating food offered to idols, and perversion of truth.

*Trade Guilds* - To withdraw from the pagan celebrations of Ephesus' trade guilds and its worship of Diana was to risk financial ruin, but these Christians were "enduring patiently and bearing up for [His] name's sake".

The opposing of these groups proved to be physically and mentally exhausting, but the Ephesians patiently endured in their witness to the truth of Christ: they did not give up (did not grow weary)!

Then Christ commends them, in v. 7, for not tolerating evil doers within the church, namely the false prophet and the Nicolaitians.

### Complaint

Christ warns them about their lack of love. They had let a noble concern for true doctrine make it overly critical and unloving, unwilling to minister to people the love of Christ. they lost the balance between truth and love.

Within the church, love for one another waned, because of their concern for doctrinal purity. They spent so much time defending the faith, that they forgot about each other. Instead of being patient, kind, gentle, and who on with each other, they became overly critical and unloving of each other.

Outside the church, they became highly critical of the unbelieving Jew, Romans, Greeks, and the like. Instead of having compassion for them, they spend their time shaming them, being critical and condemning of them, pointing their fingers at them; they held contempt for them. At one time this church lovingly opened themselves up to these people, caring for them, loving them, all the while standing firm for the truth of the Gospel.

A love for Jesus is also a part of this issue. There is a direct connection between a love others and a love for Christ (1 John 4:20-21 and the Great Commandment). If you are not loving towards others, then your love for Jesus needs to be questioned.

Jesus' sobering threat to remove the Ephesians' lampstand — to snuff out this truth-loving congregation's witness to truth amid its pagan community — shows how seriously He regards His summons to blend doctrinal fidelity to the Bible with sacrificial love for the saints and evangelistic fervor for the lost.

## **Correction**

Here is what they must do:

They must constantly recall their former position by reviewing their own history and recollecting what their forebears did in the church many years earlier. History is a teacher. We learn from it to see where we have come and to where we are going. An honest look at it will reveal much about a church.

As they recall their history, they must acknowledge that they have changed for the worse. It's hard to acknowledge that a problem exists. But unless it is acknowledged, new beginnings or refocusing cannot happen.

It is so hard to persevere. That is why it is necessary for a church to have a vision, a purpose, and a plan to fulfill these. And, once they are in place, to keep revisiting them.

Christ is asking the Ephesians to return to the whole-hearted, undivided devotion for him and others that their forebears possessed.

## **Consequences**

The consequences of not returning to their first love is simple: No repentance, no church in Ephesus. The phrase, "I will come" means that he will take action, and the action He will take is this: He will remove His spirit from them; He will remove their witness, their light.

They may continue to exist as a physical church, but Christ spirit will be gone.

## **Covenant**

Remember, Christ has overcome, but the consummation of that victory is not yet. We must continue to fight against false teacher, the evil practices of the world, Satanic thoughts and powers, and relate to people in truth and love.

Anyone who perseveres in the faith until the end of their life or until Christ returns is promised eternal life - "I will give permission to eat from the tree of life." This is a covenant. Obey and you will be blessed; disobey and you will be cursed.