

The Church in Ephesus

Revelation 2:1-7

“What has happened causing this verdict? ‘Thou hast left thy first love’ (left—not lost).

The church gradually left heart devotion to Christ and in its place put ministry for Christ, defense of Christ’s person, faithfulness in Christ’s Word, and service and sacrifice for Christ’s church. Gradually it became more devoted to His interests than to Him. This Christ regards as a perilous situation. Men who have walked with God have warned us of the danger of falling into such a barren situation.

Oswald Chambers: ‘We may oppose Christ by being diverted to duties as well as by sin.’ **S. Hudson Taylor:** ‘The intense activity of our time may lead to the neglect of personal communion.’ **C.H. Spurgeon:** ‘Let not they gifts Thy love bestows estrange my heart from thee.’ **Andrew Murray:** ‘Oh believer, let us write that down. The presence of Jesus lost is the cause of our wretchedness and failures.’” *Newton Conant*

- I. The outstanding attribute of the believers in Ephesus was their refusal to compromise their stand on the truth of God’s Word, even when they suffered for it. They were sold out for truth in a culture that was immersed in idol worship, sex worship, self-indulgence, and lawlessness. They knew they had to take a stand to keep evil from penetrating and destroying the churches’ effectiveness as salt and light among spiritually blind unbelievers in desperate need of a Savior. The church was a force to contend with because of their hard work, perseverance, willingness to confront evil, and uncompromising stand for keeping God’s truth before them as they fought against the powers of this dark world and spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Eph. 6:12).

Rev. 2:1-3

Acts 19:23-28

1 John 4:1

Acts 20:29-31

“The Ephesian church was proud of its position not only as ‘the metropolis of Asia’ (as Ephesus was called) but also of its heritage as the mother church of the region.”
Osborne

Krateō -- to have power, be powerful. To take hold of, take, seize. To lay hands on one in order to get him into one’s power. (Rev. 2:1)

- II. The outstanding failure of the believers in Ephesus was their lack of keeping a vital relationship with Christ foremost in their hearts in their fight against the prevailing forces of evil that surrounded them. Their fight against evil became more important than loving Jesus, their stand for truth became more important than loving Jesus, their ability to confront evil and keep it out of the church became more important than loving Jesus, and their status as a church which was strengthened by Paul, pastored by Timothy, and ministered to by the Apostle John all led to a misplaced zeal for righteousness over having heart devotion for Christ. At some point, whether they realized it or not, they had left their love for Jesus to pursue other loves that seemed right but were far from truly knowing Him.

Rev. 2:4
Mark 12:29-31

ἀφίημι aphíēmi -- to let go, let alone, let be, to disregard

1 Cor. 13:1-3 *If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.*

- III. Jesus wants all His churches to thrive in their love for Him. In fact, it's the only way that a church can be spiritually alive in Christ. By all outward appearances, the Ephesian church seemed to be spiritually alive in Christ, but it was not. They had lost sensitivity to the headship of Christ over them. It became their church instead of Christ's church, their battle instead of Jesus' battle, their passion instead of Jesus's passion and the only solution offered by Christ was for them to overcome their sin by humbling themselves before him through true heartfelt repentance so that He could restore unto them once again to the joy of being saved.

Rev. 2:5-7

Ps. 51:10-12 *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.*