

## First Love

*Revelation 2:1-7*

### INTRO:

- Attention: Favorite treats – talk about some childhood favorites – Orange Soda & rainbow sherbert ice-cream with chocolate syrup
  - Emphasize how it was my go to treat for a while, but eventually the “specialness” wore off and gradually I found myself drinking other sodas and eating other icecream. While I may enjoy these things from time to time, that “first love” wore off
    - When it comes to your favorite drink or sweet treat that doesn’t matter too much, but it doesn’t take a hard look at the world around us to see that this doesn’t just affect the things we eat...
- Need: The truth is we get bored easily, we grow weary quickly and often the joy and excitement we once had for something or someone to easily can slip through our fingers without us even realizing and by the time we do realize it may be too late
  - And all too often this is exactly what happens with our relationship with God... the joy and excitement that we first had when we were saved slowly fades, the joy we had in serving him in (give examples) can slowly begin to feel forced, the hope we found in prayer can turn to cold repetition, the songs we sing can just become part of a thoughtless routine, our fire and drive for God can often slowly be put down to a few warm coals
    - Our lives are a battlefield and our enemy is searching for anyway to trip us up and one of his best weapons it to take the joy and freedom of our salvation and make it seem mundane
- BIG Idea: But the good news is that we are not without hope, whether you are newly saved, saved for as long as you can think of, or somewhere in-between God invites us to return to that first love and it’s not too late to return to that joy and first love
  - And this is exactly what God wanted to tell the church at Ephesus, so please turn with me to Revelation 2, if you’re using the Bibles in the back you can turn to page number \_\_\_\_\_

### BODY:

#### I. I Know

##### ❖ **Revelation 2:1-3**

- A. “I know” – those words can mean so many things depending on who is speaking and the way they say it

1. In this case the person speaking is Jesus in a vision to John the apostle and He is not described the way that we normally think of Him
  2. Reflect on previous chapter - Jesus is described as being in power and glory, of being so bright he's hard to look at, His voice has power as it was a double-edged sword and as if it had the force of a waterfall. Here we do not get an image of Christ as the humble servant, but rather as the King of Kings who is the Lord over His church leading them forward
    - a. And in his hand he holds seven stars that represent the angels/messengers of the churches (quickly explain) and walks among the seven golden lampstands which represent the seven churches Revelation was originally written to
  3. This is the one sending the message – the Almighty God of the Universe who is leading His church from the frontlines, right beside us
    - a. So when He says I know, He really does know and it can serve as both an encouragement and a warning – and to start things seem to be going well in Ephesus
- B. I know your works – and what are they? *Repeat some of the things that they have done and expound on them*
1. Give context for the type of things Ephesus was dealing with in Acts
    - a. But somewhere in the mix of all of this something went wrong...

## II. Lost Love

### ❖ Read Revelation 2:4-6

- A. Notice what Jesus didn't say... give examples of common shortfalls we see in churches
1. Just looking at this church, they probably look great – they know their theology, they have stood firm in the face of hardships and persecution, they had removed false teachers, and so much more
  2. But something dangerous had crept in – they were doing all this without love

### ❖ Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

- B. Without love even if it looks like we are doing amazing things for God, it has no benefit for us
1. We say God look at all that I've done for you, look at how much effort I've put in, look at how many I've told about you, look at how much I've endured for you, look at what I've sacrificed for you
  2. And what does God say, the almighty king who knows everything who is here with us, says I know... I know what you've done, I've known you've done many good things for me, I know you've stood firm, but you've missed the first thing. The first

thing I wanted wasn't all those works, all those good deeds, no the first thing I wanted was **YOU**

- C. When the church of Ephesus was started, they were motivated out of a radical love for God. Explain the fact that they burned 50,000 pieces of silver (137 years) worth of magic books. They looked at their lives and saw what was stealing their love of God and said no more.
  - 1. Their first love was when as a community they were open about their failings, recognizing they needed one another and needed to be united under God, chasing after Him first and foremost
  - 2. So what does it look like to lose that kind of first love, well the Bible doesn't tell us what specifically happened that they lost their first love. But I do know this, sin and complacency are like mold – they love to grow in the dark
    - a. Cast an image of sin creeping back in and a fear to be open about it
  - 3. We don't know for sure, but we do know this - Jesus knew exactly what was going on and He had a challenge for them and a warning – **reread v. 5**
- D. They needed to stop and remember what they had lost, to repent and turn back – chasing after what was lost; otherwise while they may be saved God would not allow the church of Ephesus to continue
  - 1. But the good news was that God wasn't done with them – that He was still with them (reflect on description) and that they had a chance to change
    - a. And so Jesus, like all the letters to the churches in Revelation ends with encouragement...

### III. Ears to Hear

#### ❖ **Read Revelation 2:7**

- A. What is their reward – eat from the tree of life (reference to them being in heaven eternally with God)
  - 1. But this reward isn't just for this church – no this is offered to all those who “conquer” – but what does this conquering look like – go into gospel, emphasis on Jesus as conqueror
- B. So this letter isn't just for the Ephesians – it's for us too. Jesus knows our works as well. He knows where our heart is. He knows if it is full of love for Him or not. He knows if we still have that first love for Him as well
  - 1. So this challenge is for all of us – to take a moment to remember – to remember what our love was at first for God, to remember the things that draw us closer to Him and to see the things that are pulling us away. To repent and come running back to Him where the almighty God full of power doesn't draw back, doesn't push away, but in all of His might and glory embraces us and leads us forward.

## CONCLUSION:

- Attention: Water Pitcher analogy on the communion table
- Need: We can give and give and give, but there will come a point if we are not getting refilled, if we are not going back and beholding who Jesus is, if we are not going back to our first love, we will be empty, we will be burnt out, we will grow weary
- BIG Idea: But the good news is that it's not too late to be filled, to come running back – Jesus is waiting, ready to forgive and ready to lead us forward – don't wait
- Call to Action: Two questions I want everyone here to answer: Give examples and give time to reflect
  - What stirs my love for God?
  - What steals my love for God?
    - Challenge to be in prayer about the answers to this throughout this week each day and to share your answers with someone you trust who can help encourage you (reflect on unity of Ephesus)

Benediction: Revelation 1:4-8