

Yes, You Can Lose Your First Love

A Transcript

What if I told you, yes, you can fall out of love?

When two people fall in love and decide to marry, they seldom think about falling out of love. Yet, falling out of love does happen in marriage and a host of other circumstances in life.

It happens during times of marital engagement, that happens with jobs, and careers. Yes, falling out of love does happen.

Bess Meyerson, the only Jewish Miss America, once said,

“To fall in love is awfully simple. But to fall out of love is simply awful.”

The worst reversal of love occurs when someone who once professed love for Jesus Christ, abandons that love and no longer loves Jesus Christ as they once did. Falling out of love does happen.

We find recorded for us in scripture an occasion when Jesus addressed this very issue. Followers of Christ fell out of love with Him and His counsel to them.

We read that account for us in Revelation chapter two. It’s a letter written by Christ through the Apostle John to believers at the city of Ephesus.

The city of Ephesus sat on the Southwest corner of Asia, at that time, now Turkey. It was a prominent seaport in that day. It was second only to the city of Rome in importance in the whole Mediterranean area. It was a center for commerce, for shipping, for politics, and religion.

At one time, it was a hotbed for Christianity, Paul and his friends Priscilla and Aquila founded a body of Christ in the city of Ephesus and a Paul even taught there. It was a prominent city in the realm of Christianity in the first century.

Yet we read unmistakably today that Ephesus doesn't exist. It's abandoned, destroyed, overcome, and conquered by the Gauls in the second century, never again to resume its once prominent stature, either in the city, either in the region of the Mediterranean or in comparison to Rome or in Christianity. Nobody lives there.

Now it's kind of a swamp and barren land. What happened? What happened in Ephesus? Well, Jesus describes for us His warning to them in the first century. It’s recorded for us in Revelation chapter two. We read Christ’s letter as recorded there, penned by the Apostle John, the church leader in that day of all of the cities throughout, Southeast, Southwest Asia, including the city of Ephesus.

We read in Revelation chapter two, verse one, it says this:

“And to the angel of the church at Ephesus, write these things, saith He that holds the seven stars in His right hand and Who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks...”

What's He saying here? That’s language that we don't typically use. He's talking about the occasion of His relationship to the church at Ephesus. He describes Himself as holding the stars in His right hand.

Well, what were the stars? The stars were the church leaders among them as the angels, the leaders, the pastors, church leadership in the body of Christ at Ephesus.

Then it says that He walks among the candlesticks. But what are the candlesticks? The candlesticks represented the individual bodies of Christ, the churches spread throughout Southwest Asia and in particular, the church at Ephesus.

It speaks to us of Christ, a revelation of Himself. In essence, He says, ‘I am the sovereign King. I hold the stars of my hand. I hold the pastors and leaders in my hand. And I walk among the churches. My presence is there.’

Not only ‘am I present,’ but we read right away in the beginning of verse number two, it says,

“I know...”

Jesus wrote to them and told them that He knew what was going on there. He has omniscience. He's a sovereign King and He fellowships with them. His presence is there, and He knows what's going on. He sees it.

He knows, He understands.

That's a picture of Christ. He revealed Himself to these believers in Ephesus. And then He recognizes their virtues. They had many favorable things about them that He could say. He commented and remarked about them.

We would typically say, when we read these commendations, "Wow, what a body. What a group of believers...outstanding."

Let's read about some of these commendations that Christ gave to them. He says,

"I know your works, your labors. I know them. I see what you're doing. Hard work, sweating, on my behalf. And for my name, I know your patience, your understanding. You wait, not only that, but you can't bear them, which are evil. You stand for truth and righteousness. You don't compromise with evil. And with your culture about you, you stand for the truth. You reject that, which is evil."

Then He says:

"You tried those who said they are apostles and found them wanting."

Those were false prophets. In those days, they came saying, boasting that they were part of the apostles. Listen to what Christ said to the believers at Ephesus how they tested the false prophets, questioned them, found them liars, and rejected them.

Then we find also in verse number three of chapter two, it says these believers did not faint, didn't quit. They kept at it. They were persistent.

In verse number six, yet another thing for which Christ praised them. He noticed that they hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans. So did Christ.

Who were the Nicolaitans? They were a sex cult. They believed that satisfaction in life occurred only when you satisfied to its fullest with complete and full abandonment to sensuality and sexuality. The believers rejected those deeds and had nothing to do with them. Quite a description.

Wouldn't you say a very good church? We might conclude Jesus gave them great praise. But then He went on to say, Oh boy, here comes the other shoe.

"Nevertheless, I have something against you."

Here's what Christ had against them. They didn't love Him like they once did at the beginning. We read about that in Acts chapter 18 and 19, the foundation of this congregation, this assembly of believers in Ephesus, and the great miraculous occurrences through Paul, through Priscilla and Aquilla.

Their great preaching in this congregation led to a revival that broke out, and the people brought over 50,000 pieces of silver's worth of pagan materials to be destroyed.

How much was that value? Well, one piece of silver was equivalent of one day's wage. In our day and age, that would be, you know, maybe somewhere around \$80 a day, times 50,000, that's \$4 million. They sacrificed these materials and destroyed them because they were contrary to their love for Christ.

That's the passion that they had at the beginning. And Jesus said, 'You've left it. You abandoned it. You're not following it anymore. And on top of that, I'm not first.'

Your works are first, good works. And He pointed out to them the very good things that they were doing. 'But that's not as important as your love for Me. That must be your first priority in your relationship with Me. You've left it. You abandoned it.'

He chastised them for their great sin. We read not only did Christ reveal Himself to them, not only did He recognize their virtues, but then He also rebuked them for their sin.

They had left their first love, no longer a passion for Christ. Then He gave them direction on how they could reverse the trend, how they could experience revival amongst themselves and in their own individual lives. We read His direction recorded starting in verse number five, He says,

"Remember, you remember what it was like way back at the beginning when you first professed love for Me"

and how I was first in your life. Remember that?"

Because you have fallen from that, that is no longer a description of you and of your priorities in life. So, I want you to remember that first off. And then secondly, I want you to repent because you have fallen from that and what a great fall that was. You have fallen from it. And I want you to repent of that from which you have fallen.

And then I want you to repeat, I want you to do it again. I want you to go back and make Me first again. Love Me with the passion that you had at the beginning and make it a priority in your life. Go back, repeat.

He gives these two strong words that we don't like to hear Jesus say to them: 'Or else.' He said that He would remove their candlestick. You remember the candlestick represented the churches, the congregations, and He's warning them.

Jesus warned them that if they didn't go back, repent, remember, repeat, and renew, He would remove their congregation. It will exist no longer.

We read presently that it occurred during the second century. The Gauls came in from the North and utterly destroyed the city of Ephesus. It has never again resumed its prominence nor its existence. It doesn't exist anymore.

It's a swamp land, nothing. There are a few pillars, a few relics of past days. Jesus fulfilled His promise and His warning to them. And it gave to them a clear admonition as to why their church would fail because they emphasized good works instead of a passionate love for Christ.

When we read that in the first part of chapter two of Revelation, why did Jesus give this message to John for these believers in Ephesus? Well, He did. He wanted to remind them of Who He was, not just a person of history, but He was the sovereign authority and ruler. He was the man in charge of all things.

He wanted them to know His presence, He was there amongst them. And He was aware of what was going on. Furthermore, He wanted them to renew that first love.

Once again, He also wanted to warn them, warn them what would happen if they failed to obey.

Christ also wanted to give them courage and comfort and a reminder of the future because He promised to them a reward. We read that in verse number seven of this little passage of the letter to Ephesus. He said that if they obey, this is what I will do to you. To those who overcome, He will give to eat of the tree of life in the paradise of God. In Revelation chapter 21 and 22, the last two chapters of this outstanding book, we read about that paradise. That New Jerusalem is described for us in Revelation 21.

Then in chapter 22, we read that there is a throne where God sits and out from under the throne comes a river that goes down the middle of the city. And on either side of the river, it's lined with trees.

What are those trees? The trees of life. Jesus promised them if they overcome and obey, they will join Him in paradise, and they will eat of that tree of life. The promise that God gave for His children, those who trusted and worshiped Christ, He wanted these believers, His followers in this congregation of believers to know these truths, to be reminded of them, to be encouraged, and to be comforted in the midst of their struggles.

You might ask the question then. Well, what does that got to do with me? That was centuries ago, first century, years, thousands of years ago, what does that got to do with you and me?

Well, it has everything to do with you and me because what was true then is true now. Great similarities between our day and the day of Ephesus as recorded here in Revelation chapter two exist in great extent.

It can be described of us that we have left our first love as well. What kind of passionate love do we as professed followers of Christ have for Him? All too often, for example, in our music, we sing songs of love and praise and affection for him and we don't even mention His name. We are so ashamed of Him that we won't even mention His name and our music.

How can that ever be described as worship? It isn't. Are we so ashamed of His name that we can't even mention it in our music? Or is it to the point where we are so far greater interested in the crossover benefit of our songs that will reap us more money if we don't mention the name of Jesus? So we leave it out, and we just refer to it, refer to Christ as "him," or we hope that people will see that it's Jesus.

We avoid mentioning His name because we really don't love him. That's an example because love is shown by our acts and by what we do.

What about our sacrifice? What about the centrality of Christ in our worship? What about the centrality of Christ and the practice of our fellowship together as believers: have we like these in Ephesus come to

emphasize good works greater than our passion and love for Christ? I fear that we have to a great extent.

So, things that Jesus covered in this message to the believers correlate to our day as well. In our day, we can learn the lesson that Jesus taught to the believers at Ephesus, that, yes, we can fall out of love. And when we do, and when we emphasize works, instead of love for Christ, churches fail, and the professing church has failed today for the same reason.

Therefore, what implications does this have upon you and me for our lives today and for the congregations which we attend? It has significant implications.

First of all, for believers, you may claim that you are a follower of Christ. You would profess that you are a Christian, that you obey and follow Christ. What about your love for him? Is He first? Is He your first love? Is He your first affection? Is His glory and honor the first thing of importance in your life, or is it something else? Anything else?

Anything that might even be good, is of no value, no value. The only thing of value is love for Christ. And we prove and show our love for Christ by our obedience, by seeking after Him, desiring after Him above all things, sacrificing as the parables teach us about pearls of great price, to love him, to serve him, to obey him.

Well, what about the occasional one who might be watching, who would be called an unbeliever all your life. You have rejected. God, you have no interest in following Him. You have no interest in Jesus Christ, maybe not even as a historical figure. You have no interest at all. Never have don't want it up until this point in your life.

Well, I want you to hear the word of the Lord to you today because you are here watching this at the appointment of God, and He wants to speak to you. And here's what He would remind you and tell you.

He would remind you that, first of all, you are born in sin. All of us are; every human ever born. Other than Adam and Eve, they were not born in sin. They were born perfect, created perfect by God Himself. After that, everyone was born in sin because of Adam and Eve's sin of disobedience as displayed in the Garden.

You have a sinful nature, your sinful nature dominates you. It prevents you and keeps you from ever pursuing after God. You have no interest. You're not able to, you don't want to.

You need divine intervention in your life to come to God as He has revealed Himself in creation, in His word, and in His Son, Jesus Christ.

God made provision for people like you and me, the provision of His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus came to bridge the gap, to bridge the Valley if you will, the chasm in between you and God, that exists because of your sinful nature.

Jesus bridged that gap for people like you and like me. God gave Him, Jesus became incarnate in human flesh, set aside His form with God and took the form of a servant, came and lived a sinless, Holy righteous, obedient life.

The life that He lived qualified Him for the death that He died. And the death that He died was an offering unto God on behalf of sinners, like you and me, paying our penalty, paying the penalty that people like you and I deserve to pay.

He paid it to God, and God accepted that offering. God accepted it on behalf of people like you and me. God said for everyone who believes upon Jesus and His sacrificial offering on their behalf, I will accept. I will reconcile back to Myself. I will bridge that gap through Christ. I will make them furthermore, children of God.

I will give to them and plant in them a new life, a new power, My presence, My life, living within them, giving them the faith to believe in Christ, giving them the faith to obey and to follow Me and to experience transformation in life.

I pray for both of you this today, those of you who are believers, who need to remember and repent and repeat a first love for Jesus Christ, confessing and repenting, and turning from your abandonment of your love for Christ and renew that love once again, making it a priority in your life.

And then for you, who might not to this point have ever trusted in Christ, I pray that the spirit of God will come to you today and regenerate you, give you new life, give you new life within you that enables you to believe and trust upon the provision of God in Christ, on your behalf, trusting Christ and His sacrifice as for you, and experience God's reconciling you back to Himself, giving to you new life.

Well, I pray that today, the spirit of God will bring about these transformations in your life as a believer and in your life as an unbeliever that you might from this day forward walk in newness of life. May God come and bring these blessings into your lives today is my prayer.

