

Revelation 2:1-7

I cannot express to you how serious these Essentials are for you to hear, to grasp, and to embrace. Listen church. If you are to flourish into the future you must embrace:

1. Global missions: Have I embraced the mission, personally, as my own?
2. Local Missions: Am I personally embracing Christ's command to make disciples?
3. The Gospel Message: Do I personally understand and embrace this message?
4. An Expectation of Suffering: What if everything changed?
5. The Inerrancy and Sufficiency of Scripture: Is Scripture the first place you go to when you need counsel, guidance, direction, or answers?

Now, this morning, you must embrace this 6th Essential: Affection for Jesus Christ. **Are you passionate about and increasing in affection for Christ?** In Revelation 2 and 3, Jesus delivers 7 specific messages to 7 specific churches in Asia. One of those churches was the church at Ephesus.

READ/PRAY

In this message to Ephesus he will express His love and care for them, His praise and affirmation of them, His rebuke and warning to them, and His hope and promise to them. All of this will magnify His great love for that church. But the one thing that stands out in this message is Jesus calling them to repent of their lack of love toward Him.

I. Love and Care v1

2:1 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

1. The word angel could be translated messenger which often does refer to an angel
2. In this case, it most likely refers to the primary pastor/elder of each of the 7 churches
3. But notice...who is dictating this message to the messenger?

The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this:

1. Who is the One who holds the 7 stars? What are these stars?
2. Who is the One who walks among the seven golden lamp stands? What are these lampstands?
3. Revelation 1:20

What love and care that Jesus Himself walks among His churches...holds the leaders...speaks. Think about the grace He had given this church!

1. Paul likely planted the church in Ephesus on his 2nd missionary journey.
2. He came back to Ephesus on his 3rd journey and spent 2-3 years ministering there!
3. He stops by yet again to meet with the elders of the church in Ephesus, before he made his way to Rome and to prison.
4. He writes them a direct letter: Ephesians.
5. Timothy, Paul's personal disciple and right hand man...his son in the faith, ministered at Ephesus
6. It is believed that John the disciple whom Jesus loved settled in the church at Ephesus along with the mother of Jesus and admonished them frequently before and after his exile to Patmos until his death.

You want to talk about a church the Lord has blessed with grace upon grace! That is Ephesus.

II. Praise and Affirmation v2-3

1. **Hard Working v2a** *I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance,*

- a. They are doing!
- b. Their faith was working.

2. **Discerning v2b** *and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false;*

- a. They are learning
- b. They can identify truth and error.

3. **Persevering v3** *and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary.*

- a. They are persevering in the faith
- b. Enduring suffering for Christ apparently
- c. They were not giving up!

This is a solid church!!

III. Rebuke and Warning v4-5

4 But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5 Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place--unless you repent.

BUT! Think about this...BUT!

1. This is the best church in the list...but, I, "Jesus" have this against you. What?
2. I am really not happy with you, Ephesus. In fact, I am so unhappy with you...I am so against you that if something doesn't give, I am going to remove your lampstand.
3. Have you read the accounts in Rev 2 and 3? There is idolatry, sin, and more, and yet, Ephesus is the only church he threatens with extinction...and why???
 - a. Not because they were a bit off doctrinally...they were sound!
 - b. Not because they were stumbling and falling...they were standing firm.
 - c. Not because they were weak...they were steadfast and persevering
 - d. But, because they were no longer in love with Christ!

They had fallen out of love with Christ. They were doing and believing right, but they were not feeling right! Now ask yourself this question: **Are you passionate about and increasing in affection for Christ?**

Matthew 15:7-8 *You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: 8 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.*

Where is Your heart?

1. **A matter of location**

- a. Their hearts were far from: Not just "from him" or separated, but "far from him" or far separated.
- b. Since this is negatively presented, it follows that the positive is for our hearts to be near Him;

- Not just near, But very near.
- c. Where is your heart?
- d. Peter went from Jesus' side in the garden, cutting off a servant's ear to following Jesus at a distance to denying him 3 times!
- e. Then Jesus calls Peter to love him 3 times in John 21:15-17

2. A matter of object: "me" or God.'

- a. Their hearts were far from Him
 - 1. They may have beat for the temple
 - 2. Their hearts might have beaten for Jerusalem, for Israel...even the law!
 - 3. But not for God.

When our back is to the breathtaking beauty of God, we cast a shadow on the earth and fall in love with it. But it does not satisfy. Piper

Psalm 73:25-26 *Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. 26 My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*

- a. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength
- b. All of their (our) hearts were to be reserved for God.

Matthew 13:44 *The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*

- 1. He is the end of our search, not the means to some further end.
- 2. Our joy is the Lord
 - a. not the streets of gold
 - b. or the reunion with relatives
 - c. or any blessing of heaven.
- 3. God is not a key that unlocks a treasure Chest of gold and silver.
- 4. Rather, God is the treasure!

3. A matter of hypocrisy

- a. It was a subtle hypocrisy.
 - 1. Their lips...they honored God with their lips.
 - a. Their words were strong!
 - b. Maybe even their lives honored God.
 - c. No one questioned their loyalty to God...their religion.
 - 2. They said the right things, did the right things, refrained from the wrong things.
 - 3. But their hearts were elsewhere.

Where is your heart today? The people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me.

IV. Hope and Promise v6-7

6 Yet this you do 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 grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'

- 1. **What is it that fuels your affections for God?**
- 2. **What is it that drains your affections for God?**

Are you passionate about and increasing in affection for Christ?

1. Some of you have to say no and that is because you need to repent and reject whatever is stealing your affections.
2. Find out what fuels your affections and feed those things.
3. Find out what drains your affection for God and starve those things.
4. Your spiritual health and vitality depend on it!
5. The future of the church depends on it....the future of this church.

May the living God, who is the portion and rest of the saints, make these our carnal minds so spiritual, and our earthly hearts so heavenly, that loving him, and delighting in him, may be the work of our lives.
Richard Baxter

Some of you need to see Christ for the first time this morning.

1. You need God to save you this morning.
2. Ezekiel 36:24-28 *For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. 25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. 28 You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.*
3. It is humanly manageable to make decisions of the will for Christ. No supernatural power is required to recite prayers, sign cards, walk aisles, or attend church.
 - a. Those are good. They just don't prove that anything spiritual has happened.
 - b. Christian conversion, on the other hand, is a supernatural thing. The heart is changed!
 - c. And the evidence of it is not just new decisions, but new affections, new feelings.
4. Some of you need that heart change this morning.