

First Love: Remember, Repent, Do (Love) | Revelation 2:1-7

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[0:00] Welcome to Ontario Community Church, where we are encouraging, equipping, and engaging lives for Christ.! I'm Pastor Patrick Daly, and each week I balance the grace and love of Jesus Christ with the truth of the Word of God.

Today, you'll be hearing week four of our sermon series through the book of Revelation. We're looking at Revelation chapter 2, verses 1 through 7, which is Christ's letter to the church in Ephesus.

Here's something fascinating to note before you listen. This is the same church that the Apostle Paul commended in the book of Ephesians for their love and faithfulness. It was a flagship church in the early Christian movement.

Yet here in Revelation, it was being rebuked for abandoning its first love. It is a reminder that even strong churches can drift when they focus on only being right and not balancing the truth and the love of Christ.

As you listen today, pay attention to the three-part remedy that Christ gives to remember, to repent, and to do, which is to love God and to love others.

[1:13] Let's pay attention to the connection to Jeremiah chapter 2 and how that imagery of devotion is connected with the Old Testament and with Revelation.

Let's listen together to today's message. First love, remember, repent, and do love. Well, good morning, everyone.

So we are in week four of our sermon series through the book of Revelation. We have been making some really good ground so far, and it's just been very interesting seeing all the different connections that happen within the book of Revelation.

And we started off by seeing how important it is for us to read, study, and to preach through Revelation.

And I cannot help how often we hear of Revelation as a book that is scary and confusing, one that is divisive.

[2:16] But the reality is there's nothing to be afraid of, especially when you know Jesus Christ. Amen? There's nothing for us to be afraid of when we trust in the living God.

Our hope is in Jesus Christ and Revelation, just like any other book of the Bible, is something that we should seek, we should learn from and grow, and we should be moved to act as well.

And Revelation, like any other book of the Bible, is important for us. It is if we understand that in Revelation chapter 1, verse 3, Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

And how important it is for us to read the word of God and to hear it, but to hear it so that we understand. And so often in Scripture, when you see that language of, he who has an ear, let him hear.

It's for us to understand and to be transformed by the word. And we have got to keep the word of God. We have to keep it within our hearts, much so we hold dear the gospel message, as well as our testimony.

[3:42] I would like for us to turn to Revelation. Revelation. We're going to go into Revelation chapter 2. And we're going to go over the first

seven verses. And if you remember last week, we were going over this language where John was talking about what Christ's saying.

Where Christ says, Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold, I am alive evermore. I have the keys of death and Hades. Therefore, the things that you have seen. We had this imagery of the seven stars and the seven lampstands. The stars representing the angels or the messengers. And the lampstands representing the churches.

And so, what's really cool about this is we're going to go over each of those lampstands and what the Lord has to say. Father God, we thank you for this time and this opportunity for us to gather together as we are going through this, the book of Revelation.

And we are now going through the church in Ephesus. We pray, Father, that we may really take to heart the message here.

[5:00] May we see the good things that Ephesus did, but also learn from the bad things as well. May our hearts always be focused on you.

The source of life. The source of our salvation. And may we learn to balance the truth of your word and never lose sight.

May we never lose your love in the process. It is in the name of Jesus Christ that we pray and we all say together, Amen, church. All right. So, Revelation chapter 2.

We're going to read these seven verses. Let's read it together, church. To the angel of the church in Ephesus write, The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, Who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

I know your works, your toil, and your patient endurance, And how you cannot bear with those who are evil, But have tested those who call themselves apostles, And are not, and found them to be false.

[6:13] I know you are enduring patiently, And bearing up for my name's sake, And you have not grown weary. But, uh-oh. All that was good, right?

But, I have this against you, That you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember, therefore, from where you have fallen, Repent, and do the works you did at first.

If not, I will come to you in what, church? Remove your lampstand from its place, Unless you repent. Yet this you have, You hate the work of the Nicolaitans, Which I also hate.

He who has an ear, Let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches, To the one who conquers, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, Which is in the paradise of God.

Wow. We thank God for that. What an interesting message that's happening here, right? So what exactly is going on here?

[7:19] We see in the beginning that Christ is saying, right, To the angel, to the messenger of the church in Ephesus, right, Write this down. So this is from Christ, right?

The words of him, right? The words of Christ, Who holds the seven stars in his right hand, Who walks among the seven golden lampstands, right? We've seen this language that's happened previously, right?

Where you have this imagery of Christ with eyes of fire, right? If you remember that language. And the seven stars in his right hand, And he's walking among the lampstands.

Okay. It then goes into verse two, right, Where Christ is acknowledging what Ephesus is doing, right? So what do we have?

I know your works, right? I know the things that you have done. I know your toil, right? The pressure that they've been under, The hard work, right?

[8:15] And persevering through things. Your patient endurance, right? All these things are really good when you read it, right? The good things that you're doing, That you have persevered to the end. You've been patiently waiting upon the Lord.

And then it goes on, And how you cannot bear with those who are evil. Well, that's interesting, right? This church has a standard, as it were. They know they're not going to compromise.

They're going to stand firm, as it were, right? And many of us know people who are like this. They're going to stand in their conviction. They're going to stand in truth. And they're not going to be shaken. They're not going to waver.

And this is a good thing. And, I mean, this is what Christ is saying. So, they have a standard. But have tested those who call themselves apostles, And are not.

Well, we can see here that something is going on. That in having this standard, There had to have been people who were claiming to be apostles.

[9:16] And they weren't. And it's important when we see this right away, How important it is for when we think of apostles in the early church.

But we can think of pastors today, right? And people who are coming in the name of Christ. Are they preaching and teaching from the word of God? Are they bearing fruit?

Are they exhibiting the love of Christ? We can see that in scripture, Very often it speaks of testing the spirits. Which is very important. My friends, I have to tell you, There's a reason why in your notes, I always have cross-references within scripture.

I certainly hope to not be wrong in what I preach to you. And to make sure that it is backed up by scripture. Now, in that, not everyone is like that. And that's fine.

But you have to be careful in the ability to discern, right? So this is what Ephesus was doing. They were discerning and they were able to call out evil for evil. And they were able to know, This guy is not a good apostle.

[10:19] This guy is a false, right? A fake or a phony, right? You've probably heard the example before. You hear it a lot on YouTube where You know what a real dollar bill looks like and feels like, right?

Compared to funny money, right? Or compared to something that is fake. Well, when you're trained, When you know the word, When you are guided by the Holy Spirit, The ability to discern right and wrong, Truth from lies is a wonderful gift from God.

And we thank God for people who have that ability. And it's important for us to grow in that ability.

And so you got to know the real thing In order to know what the fake and phony things are, amen?

That's so important for us. And so we can see that's what's happening, right? They've tested those who've, Now we don't know how many people Called themselves apostles, But it's enough for This church to have a standard And for Christ to commend them for that.

And found them to be false. I'm going to test this apostle And see if they're legit or not. So it's going on in verse 3 then, I know you are enduring patiently And bearing up for my name's sake, right?

[11:27] They are persevering. They're not growing weary. This could be a church that has been Maybe dealt with spiritual warfare Or attacks, right?

These kind of things that have happened That no matter what was happening at the time, We don't know exactly, They stood firm. What a beautiful thing, right?

For a church to be able to not grow weary And to just keep Christ And keep Christ's truth in this case.

So all of this, when you're reading this, You're like, okay, this is great. They have a standard.

They're standing on truth. What could possibly go wrong? Well, we find that in verse 4 then, I have this against you.

It's the but, right? How many of us like the, You did all this good thing, right? If you ever had a job review, right? Your annual review.

[12:22] And you're like, you did all these things great. But, right? And then you're like, but you got to improve here, right? So it's, it's, Christ is auditing here.

I have this against you. That you have abandoned the love you had at first. You left, some translations say, You have left your first love.

And this is talking about a departure. A leaving from loving Christ. We think about this. Now, this kind of hits home when you think about it.

How sad it must be To be, to get things, so many things right, But to lose that love and devotion for Christ in the process.

In other words, they had their grip so tight, You couldn't have a crowbar open it, right? Nothing could get it open.

[13:22] They focused so much on truth that they lost love. The love for God and, quite frankly, the love for others. What a tragic thing when you think about the other side.

And when we think about it, we can think of people, And I'm not going to call out any person or any church for this, But we can even think of churches that are like this. Or people that are like this. They're so focused on the truth, And being correct, and being right. What about the love? It's a balance between the two, And it's certainly a difficult one, isn't it? Think about it. Well, I have to stand on the truth of the word of God. And by golly, I'm going to stand on that. But you can't have that grip so tight. You have to be able to speak the truth in love. We cannot forget that as we pursue the truth of God's word, We've got to have the love of Christ in us, So that we can share it with other people.

[14:33] So abandoning this love. Then he goes on in verse 5. That R word. What's the R word?

Remember. Remember. Remember what? Remember from where you have fallen. Repent and do the works you did at first, right?

And so, he's saying, Remember. Repent. And do the works. And what are those works? It's to love God. And to love other people.

I get this imagery. How many of you remember when you first became a Christian? You can raise your hand if you want.

Don't be bashful, right? Or you know someone if it's been a while. They first became a Christian. And that love. And that reliance and devotion to Christ.

[15:32] When they're so excited. And they may not have all the correct theology. But yet, it's like, I know Jesus loves me. And I know that he died for me.

And that might be all they understand. And I know that Jesus rose again from the dead. And that's what I believe in. That kind of excitement and devotion to Christ.

That's the kind of love that we should have towards Christ. Much like how in Scripture, when Christ says that we are to be like children, we are to come to the Lord as a child.

What in the world? I remember when I first read that, I'm like, you've got to be kidding me. Like, I don't want to be a child. Right? But you think of that sense of awe and wonder for who Christ is. And that devotion to Him. That is the first love. That is beautiful when we think of this.

[16:37] So, Christ is explaining what needs to be done here. And unfortunately, there is a consequence if you don't change. If you focus so much on truth and not on the love of Jesus Christ, what does it say that will happen, church?

church, the lampstand will be removed. Unless you repent. And let us remember when we're thinking of repentance, it's you've got to change your mind for a second here.

Change your mind and change your trajectory as it were. Isn't it interesting? Kind of as a side note here. There are some churches out there.

They're so focused on being right and the truth that yet they die. They don't grow. Isn't that interesting?

It's important to have the truth. And by golly, we have the Word of God, but not to get so nitpicky on these things, right? That's why I talk so much about how important it is for us to understand.

[17:47] We all come from different backgrounds and different perspectives. As I even mentioned in the beginning of us going through Revelation, some of you are all millennial.

Some of you are post-millennial. Some of you are pre-millennial. Some of you don't even know what these words are and that's okay. Right? I mean, we even have rapture versus non-rapture. What matters, instead of fighting each other and dying on these hills, we come together as the body of Christ.

And here's the thing. It's not about how much you know. What matters is that you know Jesus Christ. That is what we've got to know.

We've got to have that relationship with Jesus Christ. And I know that as I say this, it can be very difficult, especially if we come from that kind of background.

[18:50] And I will be honest, I was very attracted to always being right, having the right theology and fighting all the people that were wrong. I admit, and some of us, we may identify with that.

But what matters is let us not lose the love of Christ in the process. Okay? You may have your conviction and that's okay. There's nothing wrong with that. You may be at a certain place in the Lord where it's like, you know what, where I'm at, I believe in the rapture. That's fine. You may be of the theology that you're not. And that's okay. What matters is we're not going to attack and kill each other in the process. Amen? Let's not do that, right? Like it says in Scripture, a house divided cannot stand, right? We have got to be united. And we keep the main thing, the main thing, and that is Jesus Christ, the love that comes from Him, and the truth from the Word of God.

[19:51] And so in here, very interesting, in verse 6 here, yet this you have, you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

It's kind of random, right? You read that, you're like, okay, who are the Nicolaitans and what in the world is going on here, right? So the Nicolaitans, we don't know exactly who they are and what they did, but it seems that they were compromisers, right?

They were compromising the, Christ also hates it, and you find, I have in your notes here, it seems it was similar to worshipping Baal, it seems to indicate that in terms of idolatry and sexual immorality, you know, pretty heavy stuff, right?

And so, but we don't know the full scope of it, nonetheless. But this was an infiltration in the church at Ephesus to the point where they're not going to let that infiltration happen.

They're not going to let sexual immorality and they're not going to let idolatry infiltrate the church. And Christ is saying, look, I get it. I hate them too.

[21:09] But, he says specifically, do I hate the people or do I hate the works? Look at this, very important. Yeah, it's important to note that, right?

I hate the things that they do, not the people. That's very interesting. It's important for us to know, right? That it could be they were infiltrating or it could be they were led astray, these people.

We don't know the full scope of that. But in any case, just as Ephesus, we reject idolatry and sexual immorality, so that's important to note.

And finally, at the end, he who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers, I will grant to eat of the tree of life.

Isn't that interesting? The language that you find even from the garden, right, is very similar to what you find in Revelation. It's beautiful.

[22:15] In all of this, what can we learn from this? Well, the first thing is that, church, truth without love cannot sustain lasting what?

Right? So these lampstands are representing their witness, the church's witness. So Ephesus has truth, they have a standard, they're discerning, they're diligent, right?

They're focusing on accuracy, but yet Jesus rebukes them because they need the love of Christ, and they need to love others. And I'm reminded in so many times how without love, we are nothing. And we have got to have the balance of that. We have to have love first and foremost, and out of love flows truth that we speak to other people.

And so, this is leaving the first love, the love for Christ. That devotion has got to flow from us to other people.

[23:23] And that's so important. And a question I want you to think about is, has my pursuit of truth or has my desire for being right overtaken my love of Jesus and his people?

Ask yourself that question. It's a difficult one. I read that as I was writing this. I'm like, I don't like that question, but you got to think about it, right? And think for a moment further that Ephesus was commended for their love and truth in Ephesians.

And yet, later on, it lost the love. How interesting. So, you have to constantly keep it at bay. The second one is we are cared for and we are accountable to who?

To Christ, right? That Christ protects us. He walks with us in our journey in faith as well as when we think of churches, he journeys with us corporately.

And it's important that just as a person can lose their way and get lost, so too can a church, at least that's what we're seeing here in Revelation. If a church loses their way and refuses to change their mind, refuses to repent, then the lampstand can be removed, meaning the loss of corporate witness.

[24:51] So, some people may ask, well, is the loss of a lampstand, is that loss of salvation? Well, no. It's the loss of your witness, though. There are some people that are saved, but yet they don't exhibit godly living.

You may know someone like that. Someone that has been saved by grace through faith, and yet their witness is not, it's not shining brightly, as it were. And so, in the case of the church, losing that witness means the church will essentially die.

And what a sad thing, especially when we look at statistics and we see about how many churches are dying. And I hate to think, is this a pattern that we have seen in churches?

I think so. So, we've got to remember the truth of the word of God, but we cannot lose that love in the process.

And then, the Nicolaitans, then, it seems to be some sort of infiltration or change of people within the church, whatever it is, that we do stand firm in the word of God.

[26:07] We don't compromise, but we also don't lose that love. The third thing, then, is, if we lose our way, remember, repent, and do the first works, which is to love.

Remember that devotion you had. Just as I gave you that imagery of someone who just became a Christian and that excitement, that dedication, that enthusiasm, right?

I don't know about you, but when I see a new believer, it makes me think I don't ever want to be so old that I'm no longer excited about Christ. I want to be just as enthusiastic as a new believer and I don't want to lose sight of that.

And I hope for us, we don't lose sight of that either. We have got to keep that devotion. Remember the former devotion, right? When we're talking about repentance, let us change our mind.

Let us change our trajectory and let us do the first works, the love that was once recognized. I want to take a moment before we go into the application. I want us to turn to Jeremiah chapter 2.

[27:16] It's on page 746. I want to show you something here. This ties into this idea of love and devotion, remembering that love of Christ.

So Jeremiah chapter 2. And we'll go from Jeremiah 2, page 746 in your ESVPU Bibles.

Are we all there? All right. We're going to read those five verses. Okay? Verses 1 through 5.

Let's read it together, church. The word of the Lord came to me saying, Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, thus says the Lord. And this is important. This next one.

I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Israel was holy to the Lord, the first fruits of his harvest.

[28:32] All who ate of it and cultivated guilt. Disaster came upon them, declares the Lord. Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the clans of the house of Israel.

Thus says the Lord. What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far from me and went after worthlessness and became worthless?

It's showing very similar imagery. The most important part is that verse 2 here, that devotion. Right? Because we think of Christ as the bridegroom and the church as the bride, very similar language in how important it is for us to keep that young devotion as it were.

Right? When you think of a bride and a groom, that love and affection, that devotion, very similar how we should have love and devotion.

[29:32] Not in a romantic sense, but in a spiritual sense towards the Lord. So that's very, very interesting in that connection.

And when you think about this, I want you to think if Jesus came to this church today, what would an audit look like?

You know, I certainly hope, yes, we would be standing on the truth of the word, but I certainly hope we would be commended for our ability to love.

And also, we have to think, maybe for you, you can think of that devotion. And how can you think about, take some time to think of that devotion you once had towards the Lord.

And if you haven't had any devotion like that to the Lord, well, certainly, ask other people. Learn their testimony and how on fire they were and how God changed their life.

[30:41] And so, in this, let's go to the application then. How should we respond? What do we do about this? Well, the first is keep your first

love for Jesus, right?

You've got to keep devotion to Him. We love God and we love others, right? The great commandment. We keep the Word in our hearts.

We keep His, we follow in the footsteps of Christ and we have that sense of awe and wonder of who Christ is and think of that imagery as we went over in Jeremiah.

And let your love for Christ be shown to others in the words that you speak, in the actions that you do, just even in your very presence and visiting other people.

Let that love radiate. The second thing then is from love flows truth and witness.

[31:47] we have to think how God loved us first and we are saved. We're saved by grace through faith. Essentially, we're saved because God loves us and we are called to love like Christ.

We think of truth and witness, right? We have to speak the truth in love. We have to witness to other people. Telling the gospel story or even our own personal journey in Christ and how God has worked in our life.

How God has transformed us from the inside out. We think about this. It's important for us. Let us grow in Christ and let us bear fruit.

Live as an ambassador for Christ and be a messenger as it were. One who's not ashamed. It's so important for us.

Yes, by all means, I'm not saying let's not have the truth. I'm saying we have the truth. We've also got to have the love. We've got to have both of these things with us.

[33:01] And so be a witness, right? Be a witness. Share the good news. Invite someone to church. Maybe you need to share in your testimony.

Maybe you need to share how God's moving in your life. And let the things that you do glorify the Father. And finally, the last one is to guard the lampstand with truth and love.

Because our testimony, right, our witness matters. Our personal witness, but also our corporate witness. We have to guard it and protect it. We have to live in love like Christ, but we also, we don't deviate from truth either.

We have to keep the truth in us and protect it. It's a reminder for us to not let the world infiltrate our hearts or our minds and to not infiltrate our fellowship.

Instead, let us be transformed by Christ and let us influence our friends, our family, the community, and let us make a difference in the name of Christ.

[34:22] And it's also important, as we found in the Nicolaitans, that at times, people will do things that are evil.

We hate the things that they do. But we still offer love to our enemies. We still extend that, and that's very difficult.

Love our enemies? A lot of us would say, I'd rather not. Let's be honest here, right? But we think about that, how Christ was saying, I don't like what they are doing.

Even when Christ was on the cross saying, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.

Right? So it's important for us to love the sinner, hate the sinner.

You've got to know the difference. How many of us know they hate both the sin and the sinner, right? Don't raise your hand, please. Right? We may know someone like that, and I pray it's none of y'all, right?

[35:36] We hate the sin. Love the sinner. We pray for them that they turn from their sin. We pray for them that they go out of darkness into light.

That they get out of the confusion of the sea, from chaos. And you'll find that a lot in Revelation, the imagery of the raging sea, and how Christ brings forth still waters, much like how Christ said, peace, be still, bringing to order that which is chaotic.

We pray that people will come out of that chaos into the peace of Christ. Christ. And so, let us never forget where we have come from.

Christ is the one who walks among the lampstands. He is with us as churches, and he is with us individually as well.

Let us think then of how can the love and devotion that you have for Christ? How can that be shown this week, today, with another person?

[37:04] How can you practice truth, speaking truth, in love? Think about that. And how can we have our lampstand shine brightly so that others can

come to Christ?

Christ. And so, Christ, again, he walks among the lampstands, and he is near to us to restore us. So, let us love like Christ and keep the truth of God's word in our hearts.

Let's pray together. And, Father, we thank you for this section in Revelation. It's a heavy one for sure, Father.

but we just pray that we may have the truth, but we may have the love as well.

May we stand firm as on you, our foundation. May we be able to speak truth to others, but may we do it in love.

[38:14] Father, we pray that we may never lose sight of who you are. may we never lose that love and that devotion of who you are, what you have done, the love that you have for us, you sending your Son, Jesus Christ, the way, the truth, and the life.

May we never forget even in your word when it says, for you, God, so love the world that you gave your only Son, that whosoever believes shall not perish, but have eternal life.

All of this comes from you and we are grateful for that. We pray that if the Lord ever came in today and audited this church, that we may have a good report and if there's anything that we are not doing, may we remember, may we repent and do what needs to be done.

May we walk humbly before you, following in the footsteps of Christ, living and loving like you, guided by your Holy Spirit.

It is in the name of Jesus Christ that we pray and we all say together, Amen, church. Amen. Thank you for tuning in to Ontario Community Church.

[39:41] If this message encouraged you, I encourage for you to share it with a friend or a family member. You are welcome to visit Ontario Community Church. For more information about our church, to connect with us, to find out how you can get involved, or to access our complete sermon archive.

This next week we will continue in our sermon series, Through Revelation with the Church in Smyrna, found in Revelation chapter 2, verses 8 through 11.

Grace and peace to you in our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless. God bless you