



First Things

First





Dear Church ...

- **Rev. 2** “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks [a]among the seven golden lampstands, says this:
- ² ‘I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, 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; ³ and you have perseverance and have endured for My name’s sake, and have not grown weary.



One HUMONGOUS Problem

- 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 [d]eeds you did at first; or **else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent.**



What Does It Mean?

- To Leave your First Love
- Greek – protos = first, before, principal, MOST IMPORTANT
- Greek – aphiemi = to send away, to leave or leave alone, release or abandon
- Implies a conscious act in which you walk away from something that should **be your highest priority** and **object of your deepest affection and commitment**



Try This Again

- What is Jesus talking about when He refers to your first love?
- That which is above all else; highest priority, most important, worthy of your full attention and deepest commitment and around which your entire life is centered and from which all life and hope and meaning and purpose and joy is drawn.
- So He is referring to our deepest love for and dependence on Jesus, and THAT is what we have abandoned!



What Did They Trade It For?

- Religious activities, mostly. Do Better, Try Harder stuff, or anything done in the flesh that reeks of self-righteous, self-serving culture warfare or church-building, just like what happens in most churches today
- Not always wrong or bad, but often not rooted in a passionate love response to the love of Jesus that flows **from Him** to us and through us to change us and everything around us
- Of course, personally, we also trade it for stuff like?



But the Result Is

- Our light goes out, or joy goes out, our life gets sucked out, our hope fades, or passion fizzles, stay busy, but instead of the character and love and life of Jesus flowing through us, people only encounter ... US.
- Cool new way of looking at 1 Corinthians 13
- If my life is not rooted in my deep and passionate love relationship with Jesus, I am nothing!



The Purpose of Worship

- We confuse worship with going to church
- Church = announcements, and songs and prayers and sermons (often with an intended or unintended do better try harder focus)
- Rituals and liturgies that have the appearance of spiritual value but which often have little or no transformative power
- It happens everywhere, even here



Why is This?

- Because in church we waste a lot of time that should be devoted to DEVOTION, where we focus on our FIRST LOVE, drawing near to HIM, receiving from HIM, resting in HIM, waiting on HIM, surrendering again to HIM!!!
- You can go a long time without listening to another sermon from me or Mike and you wouldn't really suffer
- You can't even go a whole day or an entire hour without focusing on and resting in the One Who is your ALL IN ALL, your FIRST LOVE



So Simple (First Deeds)

- Spend intentional time with Him daily
- Read His Word to HEAR and RECEIVE, not to study and pile up more esoteric info
- Pray without asking for stuff, just adore Him and magnify Him and give thanks to Him and surrender everything to Him, AGAIN and REST in Him
- Sing to Him (with or without using recorded music)
- And listen to Him Singing over you



The Rhythm of Life

- And get into a daily flow where even every time your mind wanders, it finds its way back to focusing on Him and expressing your love for Him all over again, and hearing from Him again in that new, intimate moment
- In this flow you will encounter the presence of the Holy Spirit everywhere and always, and you will have returned to Your First Love, where He can love you, transform you, heal you, guide you, and at times even carry you





Good News, YOU ARE

- deeply loved by God,
- fully accepted by God,
- completely and permanently forgiven by God,
- lavishly blessed by God,
- and eternally, perfectly embraced by God as his child; a child who brings Him unspeakable JOY