

# First Love

by Peter Brandon

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of maintaining a deep and abiding love for God, which is essential for a life that is pleasing to Him.*

**Duration:** 38:21

**Scripture:** Revelation 2:1

**Topics:** "First Love", "Spiritual Renewal"

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## Description

Peter Brandon emphasizes the critical importance of returning to our 'first love' for Christ, as highlighted in Revelation 2:1-7. He discusses the commendations given to the church of Ephesus for their works, labor, and patience, but also warns of the danger of leaving that initial fervor and love for God. Brandon encourages self-examination and repentance, urging believers to remember their early passion for Christ and to rectify their spiritual lives. He stresses that the church must be a light in a dark world, and that individual Christians should embody this light in their daily lives. Ultimately, he calls for a collective return to first love to ignite revival in the church.

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## Transcript

The subject is found in Revelation 2 verse 1. And unto the angel or the messenger of the church of Ephesus' right, these things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks or lampstands. I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil, and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles and not, and hast found them liars, and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. And the Lord will bless to us the reading of that portion of his word. There are four ways in which we might look at the seven churches.

First of all you can look at them historically as seven churches that existed in Asia Minor, and you might compare their spirituality. Secondly you can look at them prophetically, and probably the first three give us a history of the church, and the last four if I may use the language of William Kelly go on concurrently right to the end. And then thirdly you can look at them morally and spiritually, so that as you read these churches you compare it with your own assembly, and see what kind of spiritual temperature that you have as far as the Lord is concerned.

And then you will notice in every church there is an individual message. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. Now I believe that the Lord is laying on my heart that we should deal with this matter as far as this afternoon is concerned individually.

Now first of all I want to be transparent with my congregation when it comes to a matter of first love. I must say this I am a learner, but there is one thing that I'm after. I want to know all the implications and the applications of first love before the Lord Jesus comes.

So what I shall be doing this afternoon and this evening is to be laying bare my heart before you as an individual. I shall be ministering to you of course, but I shall be ministering to my own heart. And I trust I might get blessing from this and also from our other beloved brother that has come to us.

Now you will notice with all these churches first of all there's an exhortation. That means the Lord Jesus is lifted up and we see this in the first verse. And then you will notice from two to three there is a commendation.

And may I say this, this probably is the finest commendation of any church that we have in the scripture. Then in verse four you will notice if you look at it carefully there is an accusation and it's accurate, it's right, it comes from the one who has the eyes of fire. And therefore we're all as an open book.

And therefore we must look very carefully of what it means not to lose first love but to leave first love. Then you will notice from five to six there is rectification. And that is seen in two ways they were told to remember from whence thou art fallen and then they were told to repent.

And then last of all we have that lovely exhortation when he speaks to the people individually. And it's not so much now the letter that's coming to them that John have to write from heaven. But it's the word of the spirit to the individuals in the local church.

Now if we can get through that I trust that all of us might be blessed. First of all you will notice now the exhortation and that's twofold. First of all he writes to the angel and as we all know the word angel comes from the Greek Angelos.

And that can be translated as messenger. It could refer to an angel. Some believe that each church has its representative as an angel.

Or it could refer to a correspondent brother that represented an elderhood or a secretary. Or it could refer to a body of people known as an oversight that were responsible for the growth in the church. But that is not the point that the spirit is laying now upon my heart.

Notice the person that is exhorted. The one that holds in his hands the seven stars. Now we are told that the seven stars speak of the seven messengers.

And therefore the seven messages speak of those who are gifted in order to give the ministry in the church. Now to me this is very special. He holds them in his right hand and the right hand always speaks of authority and power.

And therefore what he is basically saying is this that he gives the gifts, he controls the gifts, and furthermore he supports the gift. And all this is confirmed in that wonderful chapter of 1 Corinthians chapter 12. Then you will notice he walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.

The idea of walking here is not so much communion but the idea of surveillance and inspection. And he is walking and he is inspecting. And as we go through the seven churches he is inspecting them to see if they are actually obeying the real living word of God.

And so he is walking and it's the idea of surveillance. Then you will notice there's seven golden lampstands. Now this is beautiful.

The idea of a golden lampstand speaks obviously of the glory of Christ and the glory that each assembly should give to the Lord Jesus. I have no doubt about that. Then you will notice it also speaks of each assembly standing on its own feet as we say autonomous.

And therefore it stands before God and it's responsible before God. Then you will notice it is touched with centrality because not only is he walking but each lampstand should find its centre in the Lord Jesus. But now to get to the main point.

A lampstand is a instrument that gives light in the sphere of darkness. And therefore each local church in Asia Minor should be a brilliant light for God in a permissive society. Now brethren don't we need lampstands today.

There is no lampstand at all in Parliament. There is no lampstand in society. The only lampstand that God has is the local church.

And therefore God's light and salt company is to be found in each local church. Now we are living in a day when that awful philosophy existentialism is beginning to fill the western world. That means these philosophers are saying that now the human family have grown outside of God.

By that they mean we don't need God any longer. And therefore all the laws affiliated with God such as the 10 commandments of marriage as we have known for 300 years. We have grown out of it.

A man is a free society. A man must have freedom to do exactly what he wants. Now we have seen the outworking of this for nearly 25 years and all of us can say it doesn't work.

But can you see that each local church must be a bearer of light in that environment. Therefore each individual Christian must be a light morally in his life as he functions before God. Each Christian family must be a light that's why there's no such thing as divorce with Christian people.

We must say that clearly. Once we are married it is until death do us part and we must be a light to a broken society. Every Christian businessman, every Christian worker should be a light in the boardroom and he should be a light in the factory where he works.

And each unassembly in the area where they are placed should be that seven fold light giving almost perfect light in a dark wicked society, the lamp stand. And so we thank God for the golden lamp stand.

Now he gives them this commendation.

I know thy works and you will look carefully at the word works and if you work on your lexicon you will find the correct translation is deeds. And it's the idea of variety of works. Now that's good.

That meant in the realm of evangelism and in the realm of worship and in the realm of teaching there were varieties of works. Not like some that just gather now at 11 o'clock to break bread and that is the only work. This church was marked by the multiplicity of activity.

God commends them for that. Then you will notice he goes deeper and he uses the word labor. Now that's a different word and that speaks of the intensity of works.

You see we can have a variety of works but we may do it indifferently. But these Christians in Ephesus they put their heart and soul into it. You remember when the Lord Jesus he looked upon Israel and he saw them as sheep without a shepherd and he was moved with compassion and then he gave us an item for prayer.

Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he would thrust forth, note the word, laborers, not preachers, laborers into his harvest. And therefore what the Lord was commending was not only the variety of their works but the utter intensity of it. Then he uses another word that even goes deeper he uses the word patience.

Now in the original so the scholars tell me the word has to do with durability but more than that it has to do with consistency. Now it's possible for a group of people to have deeds, it's possible for them to have the intensity of their deeds, but is there a consistency? Now this is what I find in evangelism and this is in many parts of the world when you're there having a mission the coats are off and the sleeves are rolled up. But after the mission that's a different matter and therefore a preacher can be deceived concerning the real state of a local church.

But you see these people were marked by consistency. Do you remember what it says of Epaphras? Epaphras who is one of you, a bond slave of Christ salutes you, now here's the word, always laboring fervently for you in prayers. In the scripture you will notice that there are two kinds of fires and this is important.

There's the fire of wood at which Peter denied his Lord. It was a fire that was intense it burned and then it burned out. And then you'll remember when the Lord kindled a fire it wasn't a fire of wood it was a fire of coal.

It was marked by consistency. Our fires burn, they burn with an intensity but do they often burn out? God's fire burns on perpetually and I'm going to use now the phrase of our beloved brother, may all of us be touched with the live coal from off that altar. You see they were marked with continuity, they constantly went on.

When we were children we used to say that poem, the grand old Duke of York, do you remember it? He marched them up to the top of the hill and he marched them down again. And when they were up they were up and when they were down they were down. And when they were only halfway up they were neither up nor down.

Now many of us are like that, up and down, not these Christians. Marked by this lovely continuity. Then he goes on and how thou canst not bear them which are evil but have tried them which say that they are apostles.

Now I've called that their spirituality or their purity, that probably would be a better word. Now why? In Ephesus they were surrounded with the permissive society. Quite frankly dear friends if I gave you the background to Ephesus and especially at that great temple Jupiter where they worshipped the pagans, it would cause our minds to be perverted.

The sin was appalling. But these Christians were surrounded by permissiveness and homosexuality and immorality and idolatry but they didn't get used to it. Now isn't it easy to get used to sin? Let me explain.

If you are constantly among people who are blaspheming you can get used to it. If you are constantly among people who are immoral you can get used to it. Not these Christians.

Constantly there was an abhorrence to all that was evil. Purity in the midst of a permissive society. What a commendable feature.

And then he goes on. Has tried them which say they are apostles and are not. Now these were not the Judaizing teachers.

These were the Gnostics. Who claimed to have higher power. Many of them said that they believed that Jesus was the son of God but he was never manifested in the flesh.

That was just a theophany. They said all matter was evil and therefore these men would come into the church and they claimed to be apostles and would have higher knowledge but they tested them with the word of God. Now beloved we need that.

You know there are scores of people who claim to be prophets. They claim to be apostles. They give out prophecies.

They are not confined to the scripture. And all these need to be tested today. Now may I say this to young people.

Test everything by the word of God. Test everything by the word of God. And if we test everything by the word of God then we shall have spiritual perceptivity.

And this is what that church had. And then they have found them liars. And then he comes to this point and has borne and has patience.

That speaks of their sacrificiality. Now my dear friends I find it hard to give an exposition of that. Because it hurts me to say.

These Christians were in the midst of martyrdom. Some of them had actually lost their lives. And in the presence of martyrdom they were still enduring for the Lord.

They knew what it was to have fellowship with him in suffering. How he commends them for that. And then lastly has laboured and has not fainted.

Why? Because they were labouring under the wonderful title of the name of the Lord Jesus. And I'm going to call that their profundity. In other words they were gathered to the name.

They prayed in the name. They preached in the name. And therefore because they knew the value of that great name.

They had a spiritual profundity. Now can you imagine those seven fold commendations being read out Sunday morning. How would we feel? All of us would be purring and saying.

We never thought that we had such a commendation like that. But after the commendation then comes the explosion. What a shock.

Nevertheless I have somewhat against that. Beloved when I read this this morning. I got on my knees by that little bed and I said Lord give me those seven fold features.

As I was prepared propounding that didn't you feel the same. And yet having said that then comes this accusation and it's right. It comes from the Lord.

I have somewhat against that because thou hast led first love. Not lost. You see if you look at first love.

It's the love of the Holy Spirit. You remember Romans 5. Hope makes not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. Therefore you cannot lose first love.

If you could you could lose your salvation. But they had left the condition of first love. You see there was a moment in their experience when their lives were throbbing in the Spirit's love.

But they were moving away from that condition. Now what basically is first love? First of all I'm going to suggest to you it is the love of the first commandment. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, with all thy strength and thy neighbour as thyself.

In other words God should be first in affection in every branch of our bodily activities. Now if he were first in all our affections in all our mental pursuits and so on we would be in a state of bliss. But when we come to the New Testament the command becomes a practice.

Now why? In the Old Testament it was impossible for a man in his own strength to fulfill that command. But in the New Testament we discovered that he has put the law within our hearts. Now what does that mean? When the Holy Spirit comes into our lives we have the propensity and the power to keep that commandment.

Now somewhere along the line they had moved from that position. Secondly if we had time to go through Colossians which basically is the twin brother to Ephesians. We would find the Lord saying that he is the head of the church, the first born from the dead.

Now note that in all things, not some, in all things not most, in all things he might have the preeminence, the first place. Now what does that mean? There was only one person that actually gave his master the preeminence and that was a slave. And when he was bought from thirty to about ten pieces of silver according to his mental and physical ability he always addressed his master by one word.

Absolute Sovereign Lord. Now when a person is in first love he comes to a position in his life where he lays himself on the altar and he calls the Lord Jesus absolute sovereign Lord. Now they were moving

away from that position.

Thirdly if we had time to go through Ephesians 3, we haven't, and you will find that Ephesians is built around two prayers of the apostle. One in the first chapter and the second one in the third chapter. We should find the apostle exhorting them to explore all the possibilities of God's love.

He wanted them to know the height and the length, the breadth and the depth and to know the love of Christ that passes knowledge. In other words they had received first love at conversion and their hearts were aglow but they were deepening in that love but now years afterwards they were moving away from that position of exploring the love of God. And they were called to go back to it.

But we haven't reached the root of it yet. When we come to Ephesians 5 we find the apostle saying this. Now please note this.

Awake thou that sleepest, arise from the dead ones, and he will give thee light. See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the times. Wherefore be not unwise, but understand what the will of God is.

Now here it comes. Don't be drunk with wine wherein excess. Here it is.

But be filled, be constantly filled, be all filled with the Holy Spirit. Now that's the position that they left. You say how do you know brother Peter? Because the fruit of the Spirit is love.

And they had moved away from a spirit filled position. Beloved don't look at your assembly because we're not here really representing assemblies. Look at yourself.

And I must look at myself. As I lean over this platform expounding that scripture, am I filled with the Spirit? As you sit there, are you filled with the Spirit? Or is there someone saying something like this? I know nothing about being filled with the Spirit. That's the condition that they left.

Now can you see the importance of this? Then he turned to give them rectification and he says remember. Now that's important. I was thinking of putting down upon a piece of paper a conversation I had with W. W. Faraday 48 years ago.

And as you know he was the secretary to William Kelly in his young days. He died when he was nearly a hundred. And I was going to tell you some of the mighty manifestations that the assemblies had in England before the turn of the century.

But I don't think that would help us. I think the most important thing is to examine ourselves. And as I examine this particular narrative, you examine yourself.

Can we look back to a time in our experience when we got up in the morning and we had that lovely time with the Lord Jesus before breakfast. And in the quietness of a little bedroom we knelt down and we worshipped him. We opened the scripture and it was infinitely precious to us.

But now that's all history. It's become rather dry to us. Remember.

Can we look back to a time when we had a real passion for souls and there were times when we were praying for friends that we were concerned with and the tears would run down our cheek as we prayed that they might be saved. But now we pray that all the tears have gone and all the heart's gone. It's just

prayer.

Can we remember a time when we got up in the morning and long before breakfast we read the scripture and the scripture became so precious that there were times when we actually said hallelujah what a savior. We read it dare I say it but it's like a textbook now. And we remember a time in our experience before we broke bread we would go over our lives with meticulous care and we would say something like this.

Lord is there anything in my life that has grieved the spirit during the past week. Is there anyone in the assembly that I'm not loving. Has there been something in my life that's captured my attention.

Is there something in my life that's grieved you during the week that I've not put right. And meticulously you searched yourself before you came to the Lord's supper. But now you come mechanically.

Remember. Can you remember a time when you would sit in a gospel meeting and hear the gospel and people around you would be unsaved. And there in the gospel meeting you would be praying that God would work.

But now it's all over. You come. You go.

You sit. But the pathos has gone. Beloved let's all remember.

I want to look back at my life. I've been in the Lord's work for 53 years. Have I lost the compassion for souls.

Do I have the nights of prayer like I used to have. Do I rise up in the morning like I used to. Have I left first love.

Can you see the point. Never get old spiritually. We can't help getting old physically.

But you no need to get old spiritually. Your life can be renewed day by day. Remember.

And then he says repent. What does that mean. Be in an emotional state now.

Perhaps the tears are good. Perhaps the brokenness is good. But brokenness and repentance is not really associated with an emotional high.

It's the idea of rectifying things. Changing your mind and changing your attitude. And saying Lord I've heard your voice.

It's no good just taking a few notes and saying that's very enlightening. I've got to do something about it. I must get back to that morning watch.

But I've missed something. And I've missed it purposely. Can you remember a moment when husband and wife together before the children.

You read the scriptures. And you pray. Can you remember that time before you would go out to work.

You both knelt and prayed together. But all that's gone. Now he wants us to rectify.

Do you know brothers and sisters. It's my job to live with Christians. But there are a very few Christians now that have a family order.

Isn't that sad. Now I'm not going to throw stones at the television. That's your responsibility.

But don't grow up around the telly. Grow up around the word. And God will bless you.

Remember and then return. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we all went home this evening with repentance in our hearts. And we said right I'm going to put these things right.

I want first love. Having said that. Then he gives them the ultimatum.

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen. And repent and do thy first works. Or I will come unto thee quickly and will remove thy lampstand out of this place except thou repent.

Now can I put this suggestion to you. I have no doubt in saying this and I trust this is not pride. But when the assembly movement started it was a first love movement.

But we have drifted from it. And is that one of the reasons why the lampstands are being removed. I'm just throwing out the suggestion.

Having said that he said he the happeneer. Let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches. Now what does this mean.

Can I use your imagination and class. Could you imagine an assembly of 30 people. Hearing that message.

Don't worry about numbers. 30 people. And 30 people go home.

Individually they put the quiet time right with God. Then the husband says to the wife. You know we've never had a real family author dear.

Isn't it time we started. And we read the scriptures and prayed together. Yes I think it is.

And you had a family author. Then the assembly got together and said look let's be honest. We have never really known what first love assembly life is about.

Isn't it time we humbled ourselves before the Lord. And got low before him. And asked the Lord to bring us back to first love.

Beloved if we got there. That would be the beginning of revival. May God do it in beloved Australia.

And especially in Sydney. For his namesake. Amen.

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