

Back to Our First Love

by Richard E. Bieber

Richard E. Bieber's sermon emphasizes the importance of returning to our first love for Jesus to sustain our faith and effectiveness in the world.

Scripture: Luke 9:21, Luke 9:23, John 14:15, John 21:15, Revelation 2:2

Topics: "Personal Revival", "Christian Love"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches on the message to the church in Ephesus from Revelation 2:1-5, where Jesus commends their works, toil, endurance, and discernment against false apostles but rebukes them for losing their initial love for Him. He emphasizes the importance of returning to the fervent love they had at first, warning of consequences if they do not repent and rekindle that love, highlighting the need for a personal, joyful, and deeds-driven love for Jesus to sustain their faith.

Transcript

"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 lamp stands.

I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance; and how you cannot bear evil men but have tested those who call themselves apostles but are not, and found them to be false; I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary, But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember then from what you have fallen, repent ; and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lamp stand from its place, unless you repent...."

Revelation 2:1-5

The Spirit in which the Lord speaks to this church at Ephesus is one of great kindness. He speaks from the position of absolute lordship, holding the seven stars in his right hand. But he also speaks as one who stands down among them (walks among the golden lamp stands), and who sees and appreciates what they're going through.

"I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance.

I appreciate how you keep alert and have not been misled by false prophets. And how you keep bearing up under the strain for my name's sake.

But I have this against you: you have abandoned the love you had at first."

Now this kind,

compassionate,

self-giving Lord,

who has already laid down his life for these people, gives them a warning of what will happen to them if they don't return to the love they had at first.

"Remember then from what you have fallen,

repent and do the works you did at first.

If not, I will come to you and remove your

lamp stand from its place, unless you repent."

If they are going to survive as a light in that city, the love they had for Jesus at the beginning, which drove them to do his will with great joy, will have to burn in their hearts again and keep burning in their hearts to their dying day. Most of us consider it almost inevitable that with the passing of time the love which we had for Jesus Christ in the beginning will cool somewhat. How can you sustain that blaze of devotion for years and years?

When a man and woman marry, who expects the kind of love they have for each other on their honeymoon to last for forty or fifty years? God does! God created them male and female and gave them to each other for as long as they both shall live.

And in his order, their love for each other should not fade and become dull with monotony and with the injuries they inflict on each other. It should increase as they learn to forgive and help one another. When a woman gives birth to a child, she loves it with self-giving love.

- If she has to get up five times through the night to attend to it, that's all right.

- If she has to do without basic necessities for herself to provide for the child, she does it gladly.

Now the child is twenty or thirty does she love it any less?

In those early days when Peter first began to walk with Jesus he came to love Jesus with a love which was willing to do anything for his master --- even to die for him. But later, when the opportunity came to show that love ... the night when Jesus was arrested ... Peter fell apart. He found himself cursing and swearing that he did not know the man. After the resurrection Jesus says to him,

"Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these (fish)?"

"Lord, you know that I love you."

"Feed my lambs."

So Peter went back to his first love ... feeding the sheep and tending the flock of the Lord out of love for Jesus. Years passed and this love for the Master increased to the point where Peter laid down his life

for Jesus. Peter was able to die on a cross for his Lord because he returned to his first love and stayed there. In those weeks following our rebirth how glad we were to do anything that we felt Jesus wanted us to do!

- How easy it was to forgive if Jesus said forgive.

- How easy it was to give away whatever we felt Jesus was telling us to give away.

Then we moved out of our infancy with the Lord into the wilderness. We ran into trials and obstacles where we stumbled. But he was still there ... standing by our side. We kept traveling on, still trying to

be faithful to his name, still toiling and enduring, down to this moment. But for most of us that first love is no longer there.

- We're enduring.

- We're bearing up.

- We're still around.

But that love for Jesus we once had no longer burns with a clear flame. So he says to us:

"Remember then from what you have fallen.

Repents and do the works you did at first.

If not, I will come to you and remove

your lamp stand from its place...unless you repent."

- What does it mean to return to our first love?

- What is Jesus asking for when he tells us to repent and do the works we did at first?

1. Our first love was a direct, personal love for Jesus himself.

"Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

Not my blessings,

my attributes,

my power,

my promises.....but me?

If you love me you will keep my commandments."

The life of the Kingdom of God is only possible....this feast of victory we eat together at his table is only real, when we fix our hearts on Jesus and love him... really love him.

To return to our first love we have to climb down from our high horse of pride, become poor in spirit, lowly children and love Jesus without shame or self-consciousness.

- God bring us back to that lowly,
simple,
childlike,
unpretentious love of Jesus

2. Our first love was a joyful giving of our life to Jesus.

And he said to all, "If any one would come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me."

Luke 9:23

What does this mean but a giving of our very lives to him? ... a joyful giving of our lives to him. We deny ourselves, take up our cross daily and follow Jesus, not with tears of regret for what we leave behind, but with great joy knowing that he is our life.

"For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels."

Luke 9:21-26

We lose our lives for his sake. We are unashamed to tell the world straight out that Jesus is Lord, even if it means, as it always does, that we are rejected along with him.

3. Our first love was deeds done out of love for Jesus.

We do what we do not because that's our "Christian duty," not because of our belief in certain "Christian principles," but because Jesus has commanded us to do these things.

We do them at his word because we love him. If I try to forgive someone because forgiveness is a "Christian principle", I will soon find it hard, if not impossible, to forgive. But if I try to forgive someone because Jesus tells me to forgive, doing it out of love for him, it becomes easy.

If I try to keep my eye single, or give to people in need, because it's the Christian thing to do, I'll soon run out of steam. But if I return to my first love and do these things out of love for Jesus, I'll never run out of steam.

Shortly before he left this earth to return to the Father, Jesus met Peter on the shore of Galilee and called him away from his fishing and his nets... back to his first love.

"Do you love me more than these?"

Do you love me. Do you love me Peter?

- Feed my sheep.

- Follow me to the cross."

For us too, the hour is late. There is much to be done. But the most important issue of our lives is what kind of relationship we really have with Jesus.

Do we love him more than all these other things?

Today, Jesus calls us back to our first love.

"I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear evil men but have tested those who call themselves apostles but are not, and found them to be false; I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember then from what you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lamp stand from its place, unless you repent."

Revelation 2:2-5

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