

Light, Life, and Love - Part 5

by Roy Hession

The sermon emphasizes the importance of returning to Jesus and finding our first love, which is not an emotion or experience, but a person, and the consequences of leaving Him.

Duration: 40:11

Scripture: Job 33:23-24, Psalm 30:5, Proverbs 27:6, Matthew 6:33, Revelation 2:4-5

Topics: "Love"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a powerful testimony of a man who was once a suicide case in a psychiatric hospital. The man had struggled with feelings of inadequacy and had lost his job multiple times. However, after rediscovering his faith in Jesus, he experienced a transformation and found life more abundant. The preacher emphasizes the importance of the church receiving messages from God before His judgment is brought upon the world. The Book of Revelation is discussed as a revelation of how the kingdom of God will be established on earth through judgment and the coming of Jesus Christ. The preacher also highlights the need for individuals to recognize their transgressions and return to their first love, just as the parents of Jesus searched for him when they thought they had lost him.

Transcript

Just one word of prayer. Lord we have been praying as we have been singing and Lord we've turned aside from the world not merely to have a holiday and fun and a good time but before everything else we've come to seek Thee because Lord in many of our lives we've slipped Thy hand and we've come seeking and we want to find and we ask Lord that You will fulfill that word. You shall find me when you shall search for me with all your heart.

So Lord we ask in this these first moments together Thou wilt make Thy word very personal and living to each one of us for Thy name's sake. Amen. I would like you to turn to the book of Revelation chapter 2 and we'll just read a few verses from that chapter.

Verses which have been often read I think at this conference and possibly surely spoken on on more than one occasion. If you've really quietly gone through the book of Revelation divesting your mind of things you may have heard others say, you find it's a wonderful book and your soul becomes possessed with a holy awe as you read the things that are there. If you are studying or if you intend to study the book of Revelation and we all ought at one time or another and at periods, please don't keep saying but what does this mean? What does this figure mean and this vision? The great thing is to ask yourself what does it say

before you ever ask what it means.

In the back of my bible I've got a whole analysis not what the book means but just what it says and I can see the whole shape of this extraordinary scripture then having discovered what it says I'm ready for God to show me as much as he wants to of what it means in detail some of which he may never want us to show in detail before the events spoken of there take place. The subject of the book of Revelation is simply of how the kingdom of God is to be established on earth. He intends to do it this earth is going to see established the kingdom of God upon it and in as much as the world of men down the centuries has refused the gentle overtures of grace that kingdom can only be brought in by judgment and these judgments that are going to bring in the kingdom of God are going to culminate in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's as if God compels in history, it's revealed here evil to express itself in order finally to destroy it with the brightness of the appearing of his son and so this book of Revelation you've got to accept it is a book of tremendous judgment and it foretells the things that are coming upon our earth many of them are already beginning to operate for only in this way because men have refused the overtures of grace can God bring in and establish his kingdom his rule amongst men.

Now before you get going on the real theme of this book of Revelation you have certain early chapters where Jesus sent through John messages to his church to seven of the churches that existed at that time and how right that is before God speaks his great word to the world he has something to speak to his people the church who are supposed to have been saved out of the world for instance a county judge on his way to the law courts where he's going to try and sentence various criminals may need to spend a little time with his children at home there may be matters he's got to speak to them about matters that may need his discipline how right it is that things should be right there ere he moves in his more public matters of judgment and so it is ere the Lord Jesus returns God has something

for us his church and in as much as the coming of the Lord surely is drawing near it is not surprising to find that God is speaking a new word to his church and there is being experienced in various parts the revival of his needy church and so we want to read the word that he had to say to at least one church in the early chapters of the book before he moves on to the wider sphere chapter two this is the first letter to the seven churches unto the angel of the church of Ephesus right the angel simply means I take it the minister of that church whether you call your minister an angel or not I don't know but that's the phrase used here and so here is a message to the minister of this church did you know there are three epistles to the Ephesians in the new testament first of all there's

Paul's epistle to the Ephesians and then he wrote a second letter to the Ephesians in that he wrote a letter two letters indeed to Timothy who was the first overseer or if you will bishop of the church of Ephesus and some of the things he tells Timothy are to be passed on to that church and you can therefore take it that much of the epistles to Timothy are really addressed to the church of the Ephesians and here is the third letter to the Ephesians it was a church on which Jesus bestowed such concern no church did Paul labor so lovingly for as this church and here is the risen Jesus yet speaking to that body of believers because there was still grave need among them in spite of all the mighty ministry that's been exercised there and in spite of the great doings that took place there for

in acts 19 you have the story of one of the greatest revivals of the church when in that church many of the Christians came under conviction of sin and brought out their hidden deeds and the things of black magic

with which they've been playing on the quiet and they burnt them publicly so that as a result the word of God grew mightily in that city and yet in spite of all that one of the first churches to whom Jesus sent a letter through John was this church unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write these things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks I know thy works and thy labor and thy patience and how thou canst not bear them which are evil and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles and are not and

has found them liars and is born and has patience and for my name's sake has labored and has not fainted could the Lord Jesus have said more really of any group of Christians than he said about that orthodox zealous patient hard-working group of Christians but he has to go on to say nevertheless I have somewhat against thee and this isn't only said to this church there's some word like this said to five of those seven churches therefore you can take it that invariably the Lord Jesus wants to repeat to you and wants to repeat to me these words nevertheless in spite of all you're doing in spite of much that can be commended I had this against me I wonder what it is in your case that he would like to mention to you what do you think he's saying about you and want to say to you nevertheless I

have somewhat against thee and it could well be the very same thing that he said to the church at Ephesus thou has left thy first love remember therefore from whence thou art fallen and repent and do the first works or else that's rather a threatening word or else well it's there repent or else some people say this insistence on the Christian to repent isn't scriptural but told to believe it is here to five of those seven churches the word was repent and not only repent repent or else you can't trifle neither can I with this matter of the repentance of the Christian you and I can lose everything and here that which can be lost what does it say or else I will come unto thee quickly and will remove thy candlestick out of his place except thou repent I take that to be our sphere of influence

our sphere of service our candlestick and so here is this message I suppose then verse four is the principal word in it nevertheless I have somewhat against thee because thou has left thy first love I believe this is one of the most misquoted scriptures in the new testament again and again if a man isn't actually reading it just quoting it from memory or using it in prayer he reads it or repeats it this way he talks about losing his first love isn't that so yes the usual way of thinking of this verse is that we lose our first love and some of us may quite honestly believe that's what's happened to us that may be the condition in which we've come to this conference to for this week things aren't well with us in our Christian life things aren't with us as they used to be we've lost that

holy enthusiasm that used to possess us we've lost that love for Jesus that didn't seem to care what happened as long as he was glorified we've lost that joy that filled and frobbed us and you know the more happy and rejoicing you see other Christians to be the worse you feel to be yourself to be that certainly happened here as the saints were rejoicing some people got more and more miserable because of the joy of the others only seemed to condemn them the more oh they'd known it but they'd lost it and of course I've had that experience too and I was quite sure I lost the power at one time especially that I once knew in his service I lost that liberty it hadn't always been like that with me there'd been a time in my life when there was an easy flow of the Holy Spirit's power and people

turned to Jesus in evangelistic campaigns without much effort on my part it was just it was him doing it but there came a time in my experience when it seemed I'd lost what I'd had and I know what I did it's probably what you've been trying to do I strove by my efforts to regain what I thought I'd lost I prayed harder I studied my Bible more I preached with greater vehemence I made more promises and if I was dry and

cold and defeated and I was it wasn't for lack of praying and it wasn't the lack of working on my Bible I thought I'd lost my first love maybe you have been struggling to regain what you feel you've lost maybe you haven't done much about struggling but you feel that's the only way to do it maybe this conference will help you struggle and and find again what you feel you've

lost but this verse does not say thou has lost thy first love if it did you wouldn't be too much to be blamed I mean to say life's busy it's easy to lose something I'm an adept at losing things and when I lose a thing I get a panic on I'm quite sure I'll never be able to find it and I have to I'm getting myself willing to lose it then well maybe the Lord doesn't want me to find it but I yet invariably call for Pam and she has eyes somehow she knows immediately where it is and there it's found well I don't think I've done things terribly when I've lost something but it doesn't say that thou has left thy first love and that's culpable supposing a mother in a big store loses her child she looks around in the crowd the child has gone she's frantic you don't exactly blame her do you but

supposing a mother has left a little wrapped up bundle on the doorstep she has left her child that's a very different matter and this is that which Jesus says we have we have left our first love something for which we are culpable but thank God something we can do something about if I've only lost an experience of Jesus I don't know what to do quite to get it back but if the real truth is not that I've lost my first love but I have left that first love I can go back to the place where I left it and I may find that which I left.

A few years ago when Pam and I were in the States we stopped at a certain wayside cafe to have a bite or something to eat we were driving through along the great interstate motorways there and off we went and we went along this great motorway for a number of miles and I said you know Pam I suppose my briefcase is okay with the passports in I'll just stop I think and have a look at the boot they call it the trunk over there as for the benefit of Jim Perry wouldn't quite know what I was talking about and talk about the boot and you know it wasn't there had we lost it you might say we had we hadn't really we'd left it and we thought we said we think we've left it in that restaurant and we returned and there it was sitting exactly where we'd left it yes this is the word of the Lord Jesus not

you've lost that sweetness that power whatever it is experience we've left our first love but not only does that this verse mean that but it means something else I believe the first love that we have left is not an emotion but rather a person our first love was the one we loved first and that was Jesus because if you met him at all you loved him in response to his love for you as sinner the love of God that's a sense of his love for you was poured into your heart by the Holy Spirit that was given you and it evoked love for him it was a person here's a girl and a fellow and this is the first girl he's ever taken out and felt love for and maybe they've got a nice understanding going and maybe she's dreaming one day of matchmaking and then she discovers he cools off and at last somebody else

has caught his fancy and he leaves his first love and I believe this is the true meaning of this verse not merely we've lost but left and not merely left an emotion but left a person I've left Jesus my first love that's how the Lord spoke to Israel in Jeremiah 2 I remember thee he says the love of thine espousals how thou wentest after me in the wilderness in a land that was not sold it didn't even matter to you it was a wilderness it was enough you were after me what iniquity have your fathers found in me that you have forsaken me have I been a wilderness unto Israel nay but in spite of the fact they loved him at first and followed him they left their first love may I say this very emphatically it might help some of us very much it's helped me it's not something you've lost but someone

in some matter or another which you've left it's not something you've not got but someone who's not got you as he ought to have you it's very easy to see people experiencing what purports to be tremendous blessing in their lives and great gifts and I don't know what else and you say there's something I haven't got don't you believe it it's someone who hasn't got you as he ought to have you whether when he's got you he'll give you the same sort of expression of things as others have got is another matter altogether he may not but the big thing not something you haven't got but someone who hasn't got us on certain issues maybe we may be blind to them still they were in Malachi's day in Malachi that prophet went to that people he said thus saith the lord return unto me and I will return unto

you they were saying oh lord return to us because the lack of blessing was evidenced by the state of the agriculture of the country there was a famine heaven had been shut up that there wasn't any rain this lord return to us and our enemies are gaining the ascendancy over us and the word of the lord through Malachi was this you return to me and I'll return to you there's a great text when we had young people's revival conference near Paris a year or two ago in French I might I don't pronounce it in French my pronunciation is so bad but there at the back of the platform was this great revival text return unto me and I will return to you but we didn't finish at least we couldn't I suppose put the whole text on the banner but you know how it goes on to say but you said wherein shall we

return haven't got a ghost of an idea wherein I've got to return I didn't know I'd gotten even away and that's how it is but be assured that is the real answer I think this is so helpful it simplifies everything not I've left my first not I've lost my first love but I've left my first love and that person that first love is a person it's Jesus himself and somewhere along the line over an argument over an attitude over some hard letters you've written over matters in which I'm right and everybody else is wrong you left your first love because he isn't like that he's meek and lowly in heart but we haven't been anything but he loves that other person we can't we hate his guts I'm involved in this oh I find this heart of mine prone to wander prone to react the old way Jesus said the prince of

this world cometh and hath nothing in me I can't say that the prince of this world cometh and he finds something of the old man that he can appeal to and up it pops again and attitudes are adopted and words can be spoken that hurt and wound you can't say you're walking with Jesus when that's happened if he is going one way you go the other you leave your first love and if we feel the lack it's all there is from that I think it also means a third thing leaving our first love not an emotion that we've lost the person we've left and also I think an attitude which we've ceased to express which we've abandoned an attitude of love not merely to him but to others and maybe we've got hard maybe we've got censorious perhaps in our very stand for the truth for these people stood for the truth but

they didn't speak the truth in love they spoke the please turn the cassette over now do not fast wind it in either direction perhaps in our very stand for the truth for these people stood for the truth but they didn't speak the truth in love they spoke the truth in resentment and you can resent your minister because he's not preaching the gospel you can resent that other church and he said you've left your first love when you first saw the light you loved everybody but not now so the Lord Jesus has to say I have this against thee thou has left may not be over this stand for the truth maybe other things but oh it may be quite subtle love has gone out of the window and it can go out of the window in that relationship where it's most essential in the relationships in the home and it could

well be God only knows there's some couples here and they've left their first love for one another love has died and this is important I believe we leave our first love to others because in some way or other we've

left our first love which is Jesus and it always works out this way oh what a happy healthy thing it is if there's an interpreter one among a thousand who will show unto man his transgression I'm quoting from Job what a ministry some people might have to be an interpreter one among a thousand to show unto man his transgression so that God can say deliver him from going down to the pit I've found a ransom and I'm so glad sometimes someone has come to me he said brother you're so hard I've left my first love but oh thank God I can find him and all that goes with him again I

suppose one of the best illustrations of this is that well-known incident of how the parents of the Lord Jesus thought they'd lost him do you remember that they thought they'd lost their Jesus and they went up and down the caravan party walking back home on the highway asking their friends and acquaintance surely Jesus is amongst you he's playing with your children isn't he no he wasn't and they couldn't find him because they thought they'd lost him it was only when at last they'd realized they'd not lost him at all they'd left him that they then in returning to Jerusalem seeking him they found him I want to tell you this this is hard I find I'd much prefer to believe I've lost my first love than to admit I'm in this present unhappy state of heart because somewhere along the line I

haven't lost him I have left him and if you don't know wherein you've left him you ask him because there's nothing he's so ready to do is if yours and if mine is an honest heart to show us those matters where we've left him our first love and then you can begin the journey back returning to Jerusalem what a lovely picture of repentance returning going back going back on our attitudes going back on the things we've said when we said we were right we go back I'm wrong oh this wonderful way back to God do you know that chorus I think we've got it in our sheet oh Jesus blessed redeemer send from the heart of God leaders by way of Calvary back to the heart of God thank God for this way back to the grace of God to peace with God to Jesus and you come back by way of Calvary it's a long way out

maybe it's taken some of us a long time to be to get as cold spiritually as we've become it hasn't happened suddenly it's been a long way out one thing after another has come in to cause a separation as I've said very often attitudes to others have separated us from Jesus for those two relationships our relationship to others and our relationship to him go together but although it's a long way out it's a quick way back you know why because it's back by the blood of the Lord Jesus it's so easy to think that if sin has taken me away it'll be good it'll bring me back I remember some time ago knowing I got cold and got away and I was talking about home and I said well I'm going to be different Lord I really am going to be sweeter at home to my wife and so on and while I thought that but that

was the way back I was defeated before I'd ever begun how much better would I have to be for how long would I have to sustain it would I ever succeed and the answer is I never would have succeeded in finding my way back to peace with God to Jesus again but oh he showed me it's a long way out yes and it's sin that's taken you away but it's going to be the blood of my son that's going to bring you back and that avails for me when I said oh Lord I've been wrong when I'm willing to be sure and you know I've only got to say oh God you're right I'm wrong and there is the way of the blood of Jesus there is the door open at the foot of the cross even for me it's quite astonishing the contrast between the long way out and the quick way back we've seen it happen maybe someone on the very seat where

you're sitting on last night was one who told us after years she found the quick way back and the songs of praises filled this very hall there was one man sitting about over there last night he said eight days ago I was a suicide case in a psychiatric hospital and he'd been going on for years he couldn't hold down his jobs because he felt so inadequate would wake up shaking at night he had to see the whole thing whereas

of course there are some physical elements but more than the physical elements was simply he left his first love and last night with a raging face in an emancipated experience he told us he'd found life more abundant again he'd found Jesus again he's going to give his testimony to his consultant psychiatrist and they'll be glad to let him out and he'd be back on the job

which he thought he would have to resign how quick how quick how glorious why not if it's me that's got to find my way you're never I'll never make it but this way the way of grace the way of good news for bad people that's the gospel even when the bad people happen to be converted provided they admit it it's a quick way back do you know the great battle in the Christian life is not the battle to improve but the battle to be willing to admit you're wrong because the moment you're prepared to do that and not blame anybody else you become a candidate for that for the mark that marvelous grace of our loving lord grace that exceeds my sin and my guilt yonder on calvary's mount outpoured there where the blood of the lamb was so isn't this encouraging a bit disconcerting to think that Jesus is

saying to you I have somewhat against you but there's this wonderful way to peace that he's gone to extravagant lengths to provide for us and we're going to explore all this together in these coming days and find all he's got waiting for us in himself as we take the old-fashioned way back again over new issues to find in Jesus more than we ever thought we could amen now we turn to number 435 I hear thy welcome voice that calls me lord to thee for cleansing in thy precious blood that flowed from calvary I'm coming lord coming now to thee wash me cleanse me in the blood that flowed on calvary 435 oh is And Him that cometh unto me, Jesus said, I will in no wise cast out.

Thank God He does not describe the one who is to come to Him. He simply says, Him that cometh, let us come as we are. God having spoken to us and showed us that we've left our first love, I'm coming Lord.

And you will in no wise cast me out. Your promise is absolutely unchangeable and certain. Your grace is sure.

Wash me, cleanse me in the blood which flowed from Calvary. Amen. May grace, mercy and peace from God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit be with us now and forevermore.

Amen.

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