



Sermon Series: **VII — The Last VII Letters**

Message Title: **Ephesus: Abandoned Love**

Over the last several weeks we have focused on **who we are as a fellowship**, for the last week week our hearts have been fixed on **asking God to reveal who we are in Him**. We've committed **individually to praying** the **DANGEROUS PRAYERS**: **Search** Me, **Break** Me, & **Send** Me.

This morning we begin a new journey into the **Word of God** focusing on Jesus' **Last VII Letters** to His Churches in Book of Revelation.

Ephesus — Abandoned Love
Thyatira — False Prophets
Laodicea — Lukewarm

Smyrna — Persecution Coming
Sardis — Asleep

Pergamum — Repent
Philadelphia — Persevered

The Book of **Revelation** has a 3-Part **PURPOSE**

P#1. The letters to the **7 churches (chs. 2–3)** reveal that many of the congregations throughout Asia had seriously strayed from the original NT standard of **truth, faith & practice as taught by Jesus** and by those he personally authorized to establish his church and put his Word in writing.

It is likely, **that some**, in the churches, were **giving in to outside influences** by **promoting a lifestyle of compromise**, with those, who were pressuring & persecuting Christians (**2:14-15, 20**). Today's CANCEL CULTURE, SOCIAL PRESSURE, POLITICAL IDEOLOGY, etc.

This attitude had to be **corrected**, before it undermined and weakened, the determination of Christians **to stand strong for the truth** in the **difficult times ahead**. — I am concerned the body of Christ, in the west, has enjoyed comfort & acceptance as it has sought popularity over making a counter-cultural impact for the Kingdom of God.

Hot Take — Our goal is not to be ASSIMILATED BY the LOST, but to FULFILL the GREAT COMMISSION!!!

John writes, as directed by Christ, to **rebuke & correct** the **compromise and sin** within the churches & to **call them to repent**—to **turn from their own selfish & God-defying ways**—and to **return to their FIRST LOVE: Jesus!**

Our hearts should desire **HOLINESS MORE**, not find peace in **FLESHLY COMPLACENCY!**

Justification is the **flesh's** natural response to the **conviction** of the **HOLY SPIRIT**

God help us when we **no longer feel conviction** but **arrogantly celebrate our compromise as freedom!!!**

P#2. In view of the opposition & persecution, Revelation was given to the churches to **strengthen their faith, spiritual determination** and **loyalty to Jesus Christ**. The book is also aimed at **inspiring** Christians to be **overcomers** & to **remain faithful to Christ, even to the point of death**.

P#3. Finally, it was written to provide Christians, of all generations, with **God's perspective** on:

- (a) our fierce conflict with the **forces of Satan**
- (b) our intense **opposition from the world** by revealing the future outcome of history.

The GOAL, of the messages of Christ, to SEVEN first-century churches was to **challenge, encourage, warn & build up** both believers & churches **throughout** church HISTORY, even to TODAY (**Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22**).

****OUR GOAL** with the **VII SERIES** is to **Challenge, Encourage, Warn & Build Up, ABUNDANT LIFE!**

****WE WILL ASK QUESTIONS** on our Journey through **VII** like:

- (1) What does Christ **PRAISE** or **COMMEND**?
- (2) How does Christ **REWARD** churches that persevere & remain loyal to Him & His Word?
- (3) What does Christ **REBUKE**?
- (4) How does Christ **DISCIPLINE** churches that decline spiritually & tolerate immoral beliefs & behaviors?
- (5) What does Christ's message reveal about the **natural drift** of **careless churches** toward **spiritual stagnation** (emptiness, laziness, & lack of growth), **decline, loss of faith & outright rebellion**?
- (6) How can churches **avoid spiritual decline** & the **resulting judgment of Christ**?

Let us once again journey into the Word of God...

REVELATION 1:1:3

1:1 The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to His **servant John**, **2** who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. **3 Blessed is the one** who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, & **blessed are those who hear it** and **take to heart what is written in it**, because the time is near.

REVELATION 2:1:7

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

1 These are the words of Him who holds the seven stars in His right hand and walks among the seven golden lamp stands. **2 I know your deeds, your hard work** and **your perseverance**. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. **3** You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

4 Yet I hold this against you: You **have forsaken the love you had at first**. **5** Consider how far you have fallen! **Repent** and **do the things you did at first**. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. **6** But you have this in your favor: You hate the **practices of the Nicolaitans**, which I also hate.

7 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. **To the one who is victorious**, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

What is JESUS saying to the Church in EPHESUS & to US TODAY?

The Church in Ephesus is to be commended for the the following:

1. Christ **complemented** the them for **working hard** (*difficult labor*) for the Kingdom (2:2).
This reveals Ephesus is a **diligent, conscientious, industrious, and involved congregation!**
There is no laziness or indifference, no procrastination, no empty promises.
2. Christ **commended** them for their **patient endurance/perseverance through trials** (2:2-3).
Ephesus endured under *extreme hardship, life-threatening challenges*, & against *overwhelming odds*.
Because they refused to bow the knee in worship of the goddess Diana or worship the Emperor, they were **maligned, slandered, boycotted, & abused** by those around them. The church experienced **physical violence, social rejection, & economic backlash**. But still they PERSEVERED!
3. Christ's 3rd **commendation** of was for their **diligence in holding to the teachings of the Gospel** (2:6).
They put self-proclaimed "apostles" **to the test** using the GOSPEL as their guide.
They stood unwaveringly against Nicolaitans, a group of false teachers, active in Ephesus & Pergamum, who's very **deeds** Jesus said He "hated" & praised the Ephesus Church for "hating" their **deeds** as well.

Today our world & sadly even some in our churches, are drowning in a culture of **blind tolerance & naive acceptance** of SIN. We regularly swallow candy coated hand grenades of wickedness disguised as entertainment, pop-culture, contemporary ideology, deconstructionism, a more enlightened view of the Gospel. Lord, Jesus HELP US!

Today we have adopted the phrase, **"Love the sinner, hate the sin."**

This position, clearly, supported by the teaching of Jesus nevertheless must never distract from the seriousness of their wickedness!

Christ **HATED** their **DEEDS** and calls ALL PEOPLE, **"REPENT!"**;
He does not tolerate, excuse, nor adopt sin, & neither should His Church!

CHRIST GIVES CORRECTION in this Letter was well!!! (2:4-5)

ALLA — **The BIG BUT** (Yet, However)...the letter to Ephesus takes a SHARP TURN (2:4-5)!!!

"BUT...you have left your FIRST LOVE" (2:4)

By all metrics, the Church in Ephesus is **KILLIN' IT!** Hard Working, Patient in Affliction, Persevering under Persecution, Holding Unswervingly to Doctrinal Purity, Testing False Teachers, & Hating Sin...
Literally **HALL OF FAME Metrics!!!**

"BUT", "ALLA", "YET", "HOWEVER" — those words aren't good in my home (WIFE) and definitely aren't good when the LORD of LORDS and the KING of KINGS is dropping them!

The Church in Ephesus had EVERYTHING **"BUT"** the **GREATEST THING**. They allowed their LOVE to dim in light of the WORK, THEY were doing. Their focus had deviated ever so slightly but delivered them miles off course. This erosion of their LOVE didn't happen **OVERNIGHT**.

No one wakes up suddenly one morning proclaiming, "I don't love Jesus anymore." "I'm tired of Jesus and I'm

finished with all of this Christianity stuff.” It happens over years, after **hardships**, **questions** you can’t get answered, **prayers** offered but desired results not seen, **trials** that don’t seem to have any purpose or reason, **loss** of health, **loss** of hope, **loss** of a loved one, **dissatisfaction** with the Lord.

*In the midst of the **hard work** & **perseverance** the Church’s **LOVE** began to DIM.*

It was **35 years earlier** that the Apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians commending them for their **LOVE** (**Eph. 1:15-16; 6:23-24**). **35 years later**, the **LOVE** that had defined their journey & energized their faith had faded & lost its original essence.

It’s never enough for us to continue to go through the motions.

JESUS want more than our righteous, doctrinally correct, works & deeds.

He desires the DEVOTION & ADORATION of our HEARTS!

TIME for a U-TURN! (Rev. 2:5)

Jesus gives them a prescription for their diagnosis!

REMEMBER, REPENT, & REPEAT (Rev. 2:5)

5 Consider how far you have fallen! **Repent** and **do the things you did at first**.

*****DANGEROUS PRAYERS - SEARCH Me, BREAK Me, SEND ME!!!**—So IMPORTANT!**

REMEMBER — from where you have fallen! Remember the roots of love, when love burned bright!

When we PAUSE to REMEMBER, we have REASON to PRAISE — He is our faithful, loving, savior!

REPENT — a genuine change of heart and mind. This isn’t behavior modification, it’s turning to God for a renewing of our minds, by grace, through His word.

REPEAT — the deeds they did at first. Do you remember longing to worship, fill your heart and mind with the Word, do you remember being filled with an attitude of gratitude for His love and salvation, and the overflowing heart generosity toward Him & those around you?

REVELATION 2:7

TO EVERYONE WHO IS VICTORIOUS.

A “**victorious**” (Greek *nikōn*) person is one who has **responded** to **God’s grace** (His undeserved favor & love) **through faith** in Christ, has **accepted God’s forgiveness** & has **entered into a personal relationship** with Christ.

The Christian remains victorious by continuing to rely on God’s grace and remaining passionately devoted to Christ.

We either overcome sin, the world & Satan, or we are overcome by them & ultimately thrown into the lake of fire (**v. 11; 3:5; 20:15; 21:8**). There is no middle ground or in-between group.

ALTAR CALL:

NEXT STEPS...

****CALLING CHURCH to 10 DAYS of FASTING & PRAYER****

CLOSING PRAYER! — MAXINE & WARREN DANIELS