

## Monday Morning Rewind – March 16, 2009

Good morning! On Sabbath we continued our series on praying in the end times by looking at the letter Jesus wrote to the church in Ephesus. At the time the apostle John wrote the Revelation, Ephesus had become one of the leading centers of Christianity.

This was the church of the apostles—the church that had been born at Pentecost. This was the church that had seen thousands converted in a day, miracles performed, and the church that had seen Jesus! “Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles” (Acts 2:43). It was a time in church history of new birth, new power, purity and fervor.

The letter from Jesus begins well. “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lamp stands: I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary” (Rev. 2:1-3).

This church had apostles, miracles, power, truth, energy, endurance, and correct doctrine. Who wouldn’t want to belong to a church like that? Jesus commended them for it, but in spite of all that was *right* with Ephesus, there was something terribly *wrong*. “Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love” (Rev. 2:4).

This powerful and solid church still lacked something of utmost importance—Jesus! *Jesus was their first love!* How ironic! The church that had the power and truth of Jesus had somehow fallen out of love *with* Jesus. And if it can happen to Ephesus, it can happen to us!

The lyrics to the Righteous Brothers’ #1 hit song, “You’ve Lost that Lovin’ Feelin’” capture the pain of a love that has grown cold.

*You never close your eyes anymore when I kiss your lips  
And there’s no tenderness like before in your fingertips  
You’re trying hard not to show it, baby  
But baby, baby I know it.*

*You’ve lost that lovin’ feeling  
Whoa, that lovin’; feeling  
You’ve lost that lovin’ feeling  
Now it’s gone, gone, gone, wooooh*

What happens in personal relationships can also happen in our spiritual relationship with God. The lesson from Ephesus is this: You can be hard-working and yet be hard-hearted. You can be orthodox and stubborn as an ox. You can be intolerant of error and make the error of being intolerable. It is the love of Christ and love *for* Christ that means everything!

So how does love die? How can we lose that lovin’ feeling?

**1. Substituting duty for delight.** When you lose your first love, the work looks great—all the elements of duty, and correct doctrine may be in place, but there is no fire. You can come to church every week, faithful, on time, but inside are dry, barren deserts where everything spiritual is dark, cold, and habitual.

Jesus says: I know your *works*. I know what you do *for* me, but you’ve lost that lovin’ feelin.’ You don’t enjoy being *with* me like you used to.

**2. Doing instead of being.** Jesus created the Sabbath as a weekly date for us so we’d stop doing and enjoy being with Him. We’re always doing, always moving, always somewhere other than here in this moment with God. This crush of activity and preoccupation creeps into our prayer lives and instead of fellowship with the Living God, prayer becomes a laundry list of “Honey dos” for the Almighty.

Prayer without intimacy is like marriage without love. Don’t pray because it’s important. Pray because you are desperate—*for God!* And if you’re not desperate for Him, then guess what’s at the top of your prayer list? **Spiritual passion.**

**3. Breaking your vows.** Jesus foresaw a falling out of love with Him and others at the end of time. “Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold” (Matt. 24:12)

The word “wickedness” here means “illegality,” or “violation of law.” The disregard and violation of the law of God cools the love for God. If a church has grown loveless, it may be because it has become lawless. A lawless church is really a legalistic church because it cares more about what it considers important than what God considers important.

So what’s the remedy for passionless Christianity? How do you fall in love with Jesus again? Rewind to Revelation 2:5 and there you’ll see three steps to recovery: **Remember, Repent, and Repeat.**

**Remember.** Performance without passion is a fall! Cold Christianity is tragic, but lukewarm, passionless Christianity is sickening! (See Rev. 3:16.) Remember when and where you first believed. Remember the cross and when it became personal for you. Remember when your love for Jesus was brand new. Write down the circumstances and what you felt at that time. In fact, why don’t you send me your reflections on your first love experience and perhaps I’ll share them in a Rewind addendum later this week.

**Repent.** Stop substituting duty for delight. Stop doing and start being. End the affairs with other lovers. Honor your vows to God. Name the competitors that threaten to pull your affection away from Christ. Confess them and turn your heart back toward God.

**Repeat.** Do the things you did at first. Of course read the Bible and pray, but don’t stop there. You probably talked more about your new faith at the beginning. You may have given out books or literature to your family members to help them understand your decision. Repeat the first works, but remember something Gavin Anthony said, *“We don’t become intimate with God because we read the Bible or pray, though we cannot be intimate with God without these things. The foundation of intimacy is built on an attitude of the heart that propels us toward the person of God.”*

To pray in the end times, you must reclaim your first love for Jesus. Let today be the beginning of your quest to recapture that lovin’ feelin’. –Pastor Randy

p.s. If you’d like to share your “first love” remembrances, just reply and give a few lines of testimony. If you wish to remain anonymous, just say so. Have a great week.