

Revelation 2:1-7 (Teaching)

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[0 : 00] He'll look with me to the second chapter of regulation.

He'll probably be teaching this tonight different than how I normally teach.

Normally it's more expository I guess. It's a diverse type of approach that I use.

We may do some of that, but probably most of it won't be like that. But before we get started though, I'd like to ask those who are here and those that may be watching online.

I don't like to think about that camera because it makes me nervous, but I'll forget about it soon enough. But the question is, why do you do what you do?

[1 : 06] Why do we do, as Christians, what we do? Why do we come to church? Why do we put the gospel for us?

Why do we encourage one another? Why do we do the things that we do? Is the question that I'd like for you to keep on your mind tonight.

We're going to read here in just a second about the church of Ephesus, which is Revelation chapter 2 verses 1 through 7. If you're familiar with the churches in Asia Minor, you know that this is the first church that Jesus Christ addresses.

In a group of seven churches that he addresses here. This is known depending on what maybe commentator you read or what preacher you're listening to.

It's known by several different names other than just the church of Ephesus, but more often than not, it's the Loveless Church that I've read and that I've heard it called, which is a sad name.

[2 : 20] That could also be said for another church just not far beyond where we're going to be right now. The problem with them was they had love. It was just the wrong type of love.

But Ephesus, of course, being the church that left its first love, and that's what we're going to read here in Revelation chapter 2.

We'll start in verse 1. It says, under the angel 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.

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 hast found them liars, and hast borne and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored and hast not feigned.

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 hast.

[3 : 43] But this thou hast that thou hateest the deeds of the Nicolaedans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches, to him that over cometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

And we read here in the first few verses Jesus' commendation for the works of the church at Ephesus, for what they were doing, again I'd like to ask you, why do you do what you do?

And that question could be applied to why was the church at Ephesus doing what they did? Jesus here gives them plenty of commendations in the first part of this passage to Scripture, and even in the latter part where he says you've got this going for you, you hate the deeds of the Nicolaedans, I hate the deeds of the Nicolaedans.

So they had that in common. But in verse 2 he says, I know thy works and thy labor and thy patience, how thouest cannot bear them which are evil, and thouest tried them which say they are apostles and are not and has found them liars.

So he says you're doing the right things is what Jesus is getting at here. And he's commending them on doing those right things.

[5 : 11] And in verse 3 again, and has borne and has patience, and for my namesake has labored and has not fainted, you've continued doing all these things. And you haven't fainted, you haven't grown weary, you're doing exactly what you're supposed to do.

And folks, this is something that had been instituted in the church at Ephesus. In fact, you can read about it in the book of Acts beginning in verse, or chapter 18.

You read about it a little bit in chapter 19. You read about a little bit more in chapter 20. Paul's different visits in 18 and 19 to Ephesus.

And then in Acts in chapter 20, he's in a place called Malatis, and he sends for the elders of the church at Ephesus. And he tells them, he says, you know, I'm going my own way.

And he tells them, I'm never going to see you again. But be careful on my departure, on my departure, there's going to be evil men come in.

[6 : 18] There's going to be people that try to seduce the flock of God. There's going to be people coming in speaking heresy. And all these things.

And Paul is telling the elders of the church at Ephesus these things. What's amazing though, if you back up from Acts 20 and go to Acts chapter 19, well, let's back up even further, Acts chapter 18. Paul goes into Ephesus. There's only three verses in Acts chapter 18 that deal with Ephesus, with Paul being at Ephesus, verse 19, 20 and 21.

And 19 and 20, he's addressing the people in Ephesus. I won't even say the church in Ephesus, because he goes to a synagogue and he tries to convince the Jews there according to the scriptures.

Then in verse 21, it says he bade them farewell. And he said, I've got to go. He said, I've got to go to Jerusalem before the feast comes up. He had things which speaks volumes of Paul and his witness to the people in Ephesus, because he put God and God's will before he did the pleasing of man.

[7 : 33] Because you read there those verses, it says they asked him to stay there in Ephesus. They asked him to stay. Terry, a while, tell us some more about these things that you speak of. He says, no, I've got to go.

And he bade them farewell. They said, if it's God's will, I'll be back. In verse 19, we see Paul in Ephesus again.

And this is where the real start of that church is. The church in Ephesus started with 12 people. Well, the Bible says about 12 people. There were about 12 people there.

And they were disciples of John the Baptist. And the Bible says that Paul come to them and he asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit since believing.

They said, we didn't even know there was such a thing as the Holy Ghost. So Paul lays hands on them. They received the Holy Spirit of God.

[8 : 28] They began to work miracles with these things. But the Bible goes on to say that it was about 12 men. And that really and truly was, more than likely, the start of the church at Ephesus.

Started with 12 people. 12 people. Now, you can go on back and say, the original church started with 12 disciples, which you would have to discount one of those, Judas Iscariot.

Because I don't think Judas Iscariot was ever part of the church. It was ever part of those that believed. But you can go back further than that. But we're talking specifically about the church at Ephesus this evening.

So it was started with about 12 people. And then again, in Acts chapter 20, you see Paul and Miletus. And he's calling for the elders of Ephesus to come to him.

And he's giving them warning. He says, when my departure comes, there's going to be people come in and tell you all things different than what I've told you.

[9 : 31] And what we read here in Revelation in chapter 2, it's obvious to me that those people did not heed that warning. Now, granted, it probably wasn't the original people.

They probably went on and died and so on. But what they tried to pass on was not taken heed to. And it's obvious in Revelation in chapter 2 that that's the case.

They were doing all the works. They were doing what they were supposed to do. But they didn't have the right heart. And folks, that is what we need.

We have to have a heart for God when we do these things. I've said many times in this church and other churches, while teaching and preaching both, that we can feed all the hungry people we want to.

We can close all the naked people that we want to. We can give to this charity and that charity. We can hand out Bibles. We can do all of these things. But if we are doing it outside of Jesus Christ, it is all for naught.

[10:36] It is for naught. It will not do us any spiritual good. It will do us no eternal good. It will do the church no good for us to do these things outside of Jesus Christ.

And that is what Christ is getting at here in Revelation in chapter 2 with the church at Ephesus. He says, he goes through all these things.

He says, you're doing the right thing. But then he says, nevertheless I have somewhat against you because I have slipped thy first love. You're doing the right things, but I have somewhat against you.

Because thou hast slipped thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen. This is the part of verse 5 that throws a lot of people for a loop.

Remember from whence thou art fallen. People say, well, they've fallen from grace and I've heard that. But that's not the context here. If you take the verse before this, he says thou hast left thy first love.

[11:37] That's the context. Remember from where you've fallen. You have fallen from your initial love for me. Your initial, this is to be cross talking, your initial love for me, your initial fervor for me.

The very reason that you began these things was because of your love for me. And what else we know from the gospels?

Love for God and love for neighbor. That's why we do these things. That's why we do what we do. Or at least that should be why we do what we do.

Not so that the pastor thinks that we're a good guy or a good gal. And not so that we think that we're a good guy or a good gal. We do it because we love God and because we love our neighbor.

And we're commanded in the scriptures to love the Lord thy God with all that heart and all that mind, all that body, all that strength. And these are the reasons that we do what we do.

[12:36] So that's why I ask the question, why do you do what you do? Is it because of the love that you have for the church? Is it because of the love that you have for your neighbor?

Is it the love for brothers and sisters and crosses, is it the love for the lost? And most importantly, is it the love that you have for Christ? Is that why you do what you do?

Or are you doing it because that's just what you do and that's just what you've been taught? And you just think that that's the way it's supposed to go. Folks, there's a lot of people and I've seen it with my own eyes. I've witnessed it with my own eyes and my own ears.

There's a lot of people, church people, that do things just like the church at Ephesus was doing. But they do them out of motion.

They do it because they just think that's how it's supposed to be done. It is not out of love for God. And folks, I'll tell you now, I don't wish this for this church or any other Bible believing church out there.

[13:38] There is nothing left of the church of Ephesus. In fact, there's not much left of Ephesus, period, the city of Ephesus. This city that was once great out there in Asia, this city that was a hub for commerce and it was a hub for religion, granted the wrong religion.

They worshiped Artemis or Diana. They actually read about that in the book of Acts as well. And there was a great temple set up to Artemis slash Diana there in Ephesus.

But it was a hub for commercial trade. It was a hub for culture and it was a great city. But folks, there is nothing left of Ephesus and there's specifically nothing left of the church at Ephesus.

And why is that? Cross gave them warning. He gave them warning in Revelation 2 and they did not heed the warning.

And once again, I don't wish that for this church or any other Bible believing church. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen. They had fell from their initial love for Jesus Christ.

[14:51] He says, and repent. Folks, that's one of the keys to salvation. That is a key to relationship with God before we're saved and after we're saved is repentance.

Very first word that cross preached according to our Bibles is the word repent. He said, repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

John the Baptist preached it before he did the very same words. Repentance is a must.

Repentance is a must to be saved. You must repent and you must repent believing the gospel.

If you repent without believing the gospel, what are you repenting of? If you don't believe what the gospel says, if you don't believe that you're a dirty, wretched sinner and that God is a wonderful, marvelous Savior.

If you don't believe that about the gospel, why would you repent? You have nothing to repent of in your own mind. He says, repent. So if we believe, and if we truly believe, that will drive us to repentance because the Bible and the Holy Ghost of God work together.

[16:06] The Holy Ghost of God uses Scripture to show us who and what we are and show us who God is.

And again, we are nothing more than wretched sinners and God is a marvelous, sinless Savior we have in here. Remember therefore from whence our fallen and repent and do the first works or else. Just doing the first works is the repentance. That is the repentance. It's not just going to God and saying, I'm sorry.

It's not the Holy Spirit of God convicting our hearts of some sin that we have committed in our lives. And us going to God and saying, I'm sorry, with repentance will come restitution as well. With repentance will come a complete 180 degree turn from where you were.

[17:12] So if you've committed this sin, you turn 180 degrees. If you're facing that way, you'd be facing this way at that point. And you repent from that sin. You don't go back to it.

And that is repentance. And he tells them here repent and do the first works or else doing the first works remembering. When he said remember from whence our fallen.

If we remember the initial love that we had for Almighty God for saving our souls, whether it was a morning, whether it was a night, whether it was a Wednesday night like Byrne was talking about earlier, whether it was a Sunday morning, whether it was a Tuesday morning like it was with me, whatever the case is, if we will remember that love that we had for God when he first saved us and that want and that desire and that drive that the Holy Ghost of God put in our lives, if we truly received salvation, we would have received that.

And it was a drive and a desire to do for God. Why? Because we loved him. But we don't need to forget that we learned in 1 John that we love him because he first loved us.

He loved us. He saved our soul. And because of these things, we love him. It is impossible to love God before he loves us.

[18:41] It's impossible. It's scriptural that it's an impossibility. Repent. Do the first works over. That is repentance.

If you're having a difficult time, if anybody's having a difficult time remembering why you do what you do, remember why you started doing it to begin with.

It was because God himself, through the Holy Spirit, put that drive and you too do that. It doesn't matter if it's an official ministry.

It doesn't matter if it's preaching or teaching or singing or being neighborly. Whatever the case is, if you were doing it because you loved God and because God loved you and because God put that desire in you to do that, repent and turn back to that.

Don't do it just as a motion. Don't do it as religion. Don't do it just because you feel like that's what you're supposed to do.

[19:50] It's like people that go to church on Sundays because that's just what they do on Sundays. No, I go to church to share time with people of a locked faith as I have.

I go to church to hear about God. I go to church to hear about Christ and the sacrifice that he made for a Richard center as myself. I go to church to be encouraged by the brethren and to be helped by the Word of God.

And sometimes the help that comes from the Word of God will grind your toes into the ground. But if you're a born again believer, that will help you. I want to, I come to church because I love God and because God put that desire in my heart and I don't understand people that say that they're saved, that say that they have God.

That they have no desire to be in the house of God, no desire to be amongst God's people. The Bible says you know you've passed from death into life because you love the brethren.

If you love the brethren, you'll want to be where the brethren are at and you'll want to be partaking in what the brethren are partaking in. And not just because like the church of Ephesus obviously was doing.

[21 : 07] You do it because of your love for God. You do it because of your desire to serve God and to love Him and to love your neighbors. 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.

Now it's popularly accepted and it has been for centuries that the candlesticks that are brought up here in chapter one of Revelation are representative of the light of Christ.

He's not saying I will come and I'll remove salvation from you and that's how a lot of people read this. It's not what he's saying.

I don't believe that for a second. He says I will come and remove the candlestick out of his place.

What was the purpose of a candlestick? It holds the candle.

Christ is the light. Christ is the light. Who holds Christ up? The church. The church holds Christ up.

[22 : 18] The church shows Christ to the world. And it's not because he needs us to. It's because he commands us to. Within the pages of Scripture we are the ones that are to go out to all the world and to preach the gospel to every living creature.

We're the ones that are to do that. We're the ones that are to show Jesus Christ to this world so if he goes and removes the candlestick, he doesn't say he removed himself. He removed the light.

He removed the stick that was holding the light up. The light's still there. It's out there somewhere.

He's saying I will take my presence from you.

I will take my power from you. Remember, you read more about the church of Ephesus and church history than honestly, than you do within the pages of Scripture.

But the church of Ephesus at one point had a lot of clout amongst the people in Ephesus. Now granted, they always had people that hated them.

[23 : 20] Folks, the church has always been hated. Just like the Jews has always been hated. The Jews have always had people wanting to kill them. The church has always had people wanting to kill us. And it'll be that way until Jesus Christ calls us home one of these days.

But Christ says, repent or else I will come quickly. I will come quickly and that word quickly doesn't mean within a minute or two. It means I will come suddenly and remove your candlestick out of his place except that I repent.

That's the key. That's the key to this whole thing. Accept that I repent. He gives command to repent. He tells us what repenting is to return to your first works and do those over.

That's repentance. And he says I will come and I will remove your candlestick. That candlestick.

Accept that I repent. That's why I said repentance is key for salvation and is key after salvation.

If we're not repenting folks, chances are we ain't saved. If we're not repenting daily, because I promise you your sin and daily. If you're not repenting daily of your sins, then chances are you ain't even saved.

[24 : 45] Repentance is key to all this. They says accept thy repent. In other words, if you repent, thy candlestick, your candlestick that's holding up the candle, him, I'll leave it in place.

The only thing that's going to cause Christ to come and take the candlestick out of the place is if they do not repent. So repentance is key, but this thou hast that thou hateest the deeds of the Nicolaedans, which I also hate.

Now this is another one of those things, just like the church of Ephesus. We know more about the Nicolaedans from outside the Bible than we do from within the Bible.

I'm not going to get into them, into the Nicolaedans tonight because there's some swirly stuff about the Nicolaedans. But I will tell you that they were very well known for bringing idolatry into the church and they were very well known for just heresy in general and introducing that into not only the church at Ephesus, but several other churches and congregations that had gathered.

But here Jesus does not say he hates the Nicolaedans. He says, this thou hast that thou hateest the deeds of the Nicolaedans, which I also hate.

[26 : 13] That also goes back to the deeds. So he says, you all hated the deeds of the Nicolaedans. He said in the verses before this, the verses leading up to where we've been for the past several minutes, he said, you all are able to determine the false prophets from the true prophets and you all do not tolerate evil.

You won't bear these things. And these are the same things that Paul in Acts chapter 20 was telling the elders of the church at Ephesus to watch out for, to be on the lookout for, because they will come in and they will try and introduce false doctrines into the church.

That's what the Nicolaedans done. And that's why Christ hated their deeds and that's why Ephesus hated their deeds. It was because they were going against the things of Christ. Verse seven, he that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

To him that over cometh, will I give to eat of the tree of life. This is very encouraging for me. If you're born again, it should be very encouraging to you.

To him that over cometh, will I give to eat of the tree of life. Now just before this, it says he that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

[27 : 33] And this entire letter, we've been talking about a church, a congregation, a body of believers in this city called Ephesus.

But here Christ brings it down to an individual level and he does it with the other six churches in Revelation as well. He addresses the churches.

He addresses them as a body, as a mass of believers, as a congregation. But when it comes to overcoming, it's brought down to an individual level.

It says to him that over cometh, not to the congregation, not to the church. Folks, I love free gift gospel mission.

I love you folks here. But y'all can't get me to heaven. Y'all cannot get me to heaven. You can't get my wife to heaven. You can't get my boys to heaven.

[28 : 33] The grandbaby. You can't get anybody to heaven. You can't even get yourselves to heaven. It takes God. It takes Christ to do just that.

He says to him that over cometh, how do we overcome? Through Christ. That's the only way we can overcome. Through Christ, what does the scripture teach?

We are more than conquerors. We overcome with Christ. We overcome through Christ. And that is the only way we can overcome. But it is an individual basis that we overcome.

Now granted, we can help each other alone. I can be an encouragement to you. You can be an encouragement to me. We can help other congregations. Our congregation here can be an encouragement to another congregation.

We can help each other alone. But the overcoming is individual. Because salvation is individual. God looked down on me one day.

[29 : 38] God passed by everybody that was in that shop that day and come to me and saved me individually.

Thank you, Lord. God came to you one day. Maybe you was at church. Maybe you was at an outdoor meeting. Maybe you was at the creek or somewhere else.

I don't know where you was. But God passed by a whole bunch of people to come to where you were and to save your soul on an individual basis.

And overcoming is an individual thing to him that over cometh. And again, if you read about the other six churches in Revelation 2 and 3, you'll see to him that overcomes.

The entire congregation is addressed. But God knows the congregation can't save one individual. And one individual outside of Jesus Christ cannot save the congregation to him that overcomes.

[30 : 43] Will I get to eat of the tree of life? This is beautiful. Because it's Christ saying, I have someone against thee. Although you're doing all these wonderful and these great things, why are you doing what you're doing?

Repent. Do the first works over. I'm going to come quickly. I'm going to remove your candlestick. Accept that you repent.

Accept thou repent to him that overcomes. I will give to eat of the tree of life. Christ here is telling us to repent. He's telling us what the reward of that is.

And this is so beautiful because it says, I will give to him to eat of the tree of life. Folks, this speaks of the eternity not only of God, but of a saved soul.

It speaks of the immortality of a saved individual. He says, to him that overcomes, and once again, we can only overcome in and through Jesus Christ.

[31 : 45] Only through him. And only by him can we do that. And then he will give to us to eat. If we are overcomers in him and by him and through him, he will give to us to eat of the tree of life.

And that is us being with him forever and ever and ever and ever. This is what Christ wants.

He wants us to repent. He wants us to return to the first works. He wants us to remember the initial love that we have for him. And he wants us to do our works because of that love that we have for him and have for our neighbor.

And he wants us to overcome. He's telling us how to do it through this entire seven verses that we've read tonight. He is telling us what the problem is, and he's telling us how to overcome. That tells me that he wants us to overcome. He wants us to do this. I will give to him to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

[32 : 56] Folks, that don't mean we're going to be in the Garden of Eden. I know that's the picture that's kind of painted here, the paradise of God being eaten that we read about in the first few chapters of Genesis.

The folks, the paradise of God is much more elaborate than Eden. The paradise of God is heaven itself. The paradise of God is the place where Christ is, and it's the place where Christ will dwell for all of eternity.

I promise you, if Christ is not there, it will not be paradise. But because he's there and because he will be there, that's what makes it paradise.

He is the one that gives us the ability, that grants us the ability to eat of the tree of life. And he is the very one that has made the paradise of God.

And we can dwell forever with him in that place one day if we overcome, as per these words that we read here tonight. So I ask again, why do you do what you do?

[34 : 06] Is it out of genuine love for God and your neighbor? Or is it because you just think that's how it's supposed to be?

Or you think that that will somehow merit your place in this paradise of God that we just spoke about? That's a soul searching question.

And I hope it's been a blessing and an encouragement to somebody tonight. God bless you all. I appreciate you.