

Sermon Title: The Church That Lost It's Love For Christ

Sermon Text: Revelation 2:1-7

Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to be serious about love, light, and life that is reflective of intimate fellowship with Jesus Christ.

Sermon Proposition: There are 5 exhortations given to the loveless church.

Introduction: The Church

The Church in Ephesus: Perhaps no church in history had as rich a heritage as the congregation at Ephesus. The gospel was introduced to that city by Paul's close friends and partners in ministry, Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:18-19). They were soon joined by the eloquent preacher and powerful debater Apollos (Acts 18:24-26). Priscilla, Aquila, and Apollos laid the groundwork for Paul's ministry in Ephesus.

The apostle Paul stopped briefly in Ephesus near the end of his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19-21), but his real ministry in that key city took place on his third missionary journey. Arriving in Ephesus, he first encountered a group of Old Testament saints, followers of John the Baptist (Acts 19:1-7). After preaching the gospel to them, he baptized them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 19:5). That began Paul's work of building the church at Ephesus – a work that would last for three years (Acts 20:31). Later, on his way to Jerusalem near the end of his third missionary journey, he taught the elders of the Ephesian church the essential principles of church leadership (Acts 20:17-38), the gist of which he later expanded in his pastoral epistles. Paul's protégé Timothy served as pastor of the church at Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3). Onesiphorus (2 Tim 1:16, 18) and Tychicus (2 Tim 4:12), two more of Paul's fellow laborers, also ministered at Ephesus. Finally, according to the testimony of the early church, the apostle John spent the last decades of his life at Ephesus, from which he likely wrote his three epistles in which he calls himself "the elder" (cf. 2 John 1; 3 John 1). He was no doubt leading the Ephesian church when he was arrested and exiled to Patmos.

Dramatic and remarkable events accompanied the birth of the Ephesian church. Paul's ministry profoundly affected not only the city of Ephesus, but also the entire province of Asia (Acts 19:10). As previously noted, it was undoubtedly during this time that the rest of the seven churches were founded. God supernaturally affirmed Paul as His spokesman through a series of spectacular miracles (Acts 19:11-12). Attempting to emulate Paul's success, a group of Jewish would-be exorcists were beaten and humiliated by a demon-possessed individual (Acts 19:13-16). Their debacle spread consternation and fear throughout the city, causing "the name of the Lord Jesus [to be] magnified" (Acts 19:17). Shocked into realizing the futility of trusting in pagan practices, "many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver" (vv.18-19). That staggering sum, equivalent to 50,000 days of workers' wages, reveals the magnitude of Ephesus's involvement in the magic arts.

The striking conversions of large numbers of Ephesians posed a severe economic threat to the city's pagan craftsmen. Ephesus was the center of the worship of the goddess Artemis (known to the Romans as Diana), whose ornate temple was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. At the instigation of a silversmith named Demetrius the

craftsmen, who saw their lucrative business endangered, reacted violently. The ensuing riot threw Ephesus into chaos (Acts 19:23-41).

By the time of this letter, four decades had passed since the Ephesian church's tumultuous birth. The apostle Paul was gone, as were many of the first generation of believers converted under his ministry. A new situation called for another inspired letter to the Ephesians, this one from the Lord Himself, penned by the apostle John.

The City

Ephesus (2:1b)

Although not its capital (Pergamum was the province's official capital), Ephesus was the most important city in Asia Minor. (Since the Roman governor resided there, it could be argued that Ephesus was the de facto capital.) Its population in New Testament times has been estimated at between 250,000 and 500,000 people. The city's theater, visible today, into which the frenzied rioters dragged Paul's companions Gaius and Aristarchus (Acts 19:29), held an estimated 25,000 people. Ephesus was a free city (i.e., self-governing, within limits), and no Roman troops were garrisoned there. The city hosted athletic events, rivaling the Olympic games.

Ephesus was the primary harbor in the province of Asia. (By law incoming Roman governors had to enter Asia through Ephesus.) The city was located on the Cayster River, about three miles upriver from where it flowed into the sea. Those disembarking at the harbor traveled along a magnificent, wide, column-lined road (the Arcadian Way) that led to the center of the city. In John's day silt deposited by the Cayster River was slowly filling up the harbor, forcing the city to fight to keep a channel open. That battle would ultimately be lost, and today the ruins of Ephesus are located some six miles inland from the sea.

Ephesus was also strategically located at the junction of four of the most important Roman roads in Asia Minor. That, along with its harbor, prompted the geographer Strabo (a contemporary of Christ) to describe Ephesus as the market of Asia.

But Ephesus was most famous as the center of the worship of the goddess Artemis (Diana) – a point of great civic pride (Acts 19:27, 35). The temple of Artemis was Ephesus's most prominent landmark. Because its inner shrine was supposedly inviolable, the temple served as one of the most important banks in the Mediterranean world. The temple and its environs also provided sanctuary for criminals. Further, the sale of items used in the worship of Artemis provided an important source of income for the city (cf Acts 19:24). Every spring a month-long festival was held in honor of the goddess, complete with athletic, dramatic, and musical events. Paul may have anticipated this annual event as a unique evangelistic opportunity and have been waiting for it when he wrote the Corinthians that he intended to remain in Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:8).

The worship of Artemis was unspeakably vile. Her idol was a gross, many-breasted monstrosity, popularly believed to have fallen from heaven (Acts 19:35). The temple was attended by numerous priests, eunuchs, and slaves. Thousands of priestesses, who were little more than ritual prostitutes, played a major role in the worship of Artemis. The temple grounds were a chaotic cacophony of priests, prostitutes, bankers, criminals, musicians, dancers, and frenzied, hysterical worshippers. The philosopher Heraclitus was called the weeping philosopher because no one, he declared, could live in Ephesus and not

weep over its immorality (see William Barclay, *The Revelation of John* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975], 1:60).

Huddled in the midst of such pagan idolatry that characterized Ephesus was a faithful group of Christians. It was to them that Christ addressed this first of the seven letters.

-Information taken from "The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Revelation 1-11 p.56-58.

I. The **consultation of the loveless church. V.1**

- A. The consultation is given to the **church**. V.1a
- B. The consultation is given to the **leaders**. V.1b
- C. The consultation is given to the **churches**. V.1c

II. The **commendation of the loveless church. V.2-3**

- A. The loveless church had a zeal for **activity**. V.2a
- B. The loveless church had a zeal for **action**. V.2b
- C. The loveless church had a zeal for **advancement**. V.2c
- D. The loveless church had a zeal for **absolutes**. V.2d

2 John 7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ *as* coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

2 John 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him;

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, **17** that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

- E. The loveless church had a zeal for **authority**. V.2e

2 Corinthians 4:5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.

2 Corinthians 10:17 But "he who glories, let him glory in the LORD." **18** For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord

commends. **11:1** Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly -- and indeed you do bear with me. **2** For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ. **3** But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. **4** For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or *if* you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted -- you may well put up with it!

Galatians 1:6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, **7** which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. **8** But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. **9** As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. **10** For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

1 John 2:18 Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. **19** They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but *they went out* that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. **20** But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. **21** I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. **22** Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. **23** Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also. **24** Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. **25** And this is the promise that He has promised us -- eternal life. **26** These things I have written to you concerning those who *try to* deceive you. **27** But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

Matthew 7:15 " Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

F. The loveless church had a zeal for **appreciation**. V.3

III. The **condemnation** of the loveless church. V.4

Matthew 22:37 Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' **38** "This is *the* first and great commandment. **39** "And *the* second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' **40** "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

Matthew 10:37 "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. **38** "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. **39** "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.

Ephesians 5:1 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. **2** And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

Matthew 24:12 "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

1 Peter 1:8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

John 10:21 Others said, "These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?" **22** Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. **23** And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch.

John 13:34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. **35** "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

1 Peter 1:22 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,

1 Corinthians 1:10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Ezekiel 16:8 "When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time *was* the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine," says the Lord GOD. **9** "Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil. **10** "I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk. **11** "I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your wrists, and a chain on your neck. **12** "And I put a jewel in your nose, earrings

in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head. **13** "Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing *was of* fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate *pastry of* fine flour, honey, and oil. You were exceedingly beautiful, and succeeded to royalty. **14** "Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it *was* perfect through My splendor which I had bestowed on you," says the Lord GOD. **15** " But you trusted in your own beauty, played the harlot because of your fame, and poured out your harlotry on everyone passing by who *would have* it.

IV. The **consecration** of the loveless church. V.5-6

- A. The 1st step of consecration is to **remember**. V.5a
- B. The 2nd step of consecration is to **repent**. V.5b
- C. The 3rd step of consecration is to **return**. V.5c
- D. The 4th step of consecration is **removal**. 5d

V. The **coronation** of the loveless church. V.7

- A. The **exhortation** to the loveless church. V.7a

- 1. The exhortation of **individual** responsibility.
- 2. The exhortation of **corporate** responsibility.

1 John 2:26 These things I have written to you concerning those who *try to* deceive you. **27** But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

1 John 5:4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world -- our faith. **5** Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

- B. The **promise** to the loveless church. V.7b

- 1. The promise of eternal **life**.

Proverbs 4:23 Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it *spring* the issues of life.

- 2. The promise of eternal **paradise**.

Genesis 2:9 And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life *was* also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Revelation 22:5 There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.

Revelation 22:14 Blessed *are* those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. **15** But outside *are* dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.

Revelation 22:19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.