

Revelation 2:4-5

Last week we talked about the 7 commendations to the Church at Ephesus. Now comes the condemnation. "You have left your first love."

1. You – Vs. 4 – It was the church that had done this. Not just one individual. But the church as a whole that needed to be reminded what they had done. It is easy to get into a rut with everyone else. God was speaking to everyone personally. God seldom says, "I want you to know that your best friend has done this or that." He will speak to an individual first. One on one. God always prefers the intimacy of face to face conversation.
2. Left – vs 4 – In order to leave, you first have to arrive. That means that the church at one time was not guilty of "leaving her first love." That means that the church was about the business that God had called them to. It means that the church was so much in love with Jesus that it was the "gospel" in action. It does not mean that the church had become an apostate church. It just meant that they had gotten wrapped up in the "how" of what they were doing and had forgotten the "why" they were doing things. They had let their personal relationship with Christ slip to the back burner. It is so easy to get "caught-up" in the doing that we sometimes forget the "being."
3. First – vs. 4 – To be first, there must be a second or third. This means that the church had replaced the original "first" with something else. Let's look at what that might be. The church had been commended on the "good works" it had been doing. So it is easy to see how those things had replaced the real "first" thing it should have been doing. Being and staying in love with Jesus. How about you. Are just as much in love with Jesus today as you were when you first became a Christian? Do you long to pray and read His word as you once did? Are you as eager to come to bible study to hear more and learn more like you once did? If not, ask yourself if you have lost your "first" love?
4. Love – vs. 4 – here we see the object of what this church left. It was the intimate relationship of love with Jesus. It is so easy to get lost in the things we are doing and the world that we slowly slip into this condition. We know that love has three kinds of demonstration. Agape, phileo, and eros. We know from versus 1-3 that the church was demonstrating agape love and phileo love. That wasn't the problem. It was the lack of personal intimate relationship type of love with Christ Himself that the church was being condemned. You see, it is not just "good enough" to love on others if we disregard our own personal relationship with Christ. It is one of the hardest things to maintain. Especially when we are in ministry. We get so caught up in the "doing" and forget about the "being."
5. Remember – vs. 5 – All through scripture we are reminded to "remember." It is God's way of bringing us back to the things and times that demonstrated His power and goodness in our lives. You know in your own life that often when we "remember" we realize that things aren't just the way they were or need to be. So God is reminding us to think back to when we had that intimate relationship with Him. Think and do what you did back then. God often told the children to "remember" the past to encourage that He would care for them and protect them, as well as give them the promises He made to them. It is the same for us today. We need to remember the times we were in tight fellowship with Him and go back to that time.

6. From where you have fallen – vs. 5 – God is so specific. He requires us to remember just where we went wrong. God never speaks to us in general terms, like, “hey y’all, let’s not be crazy anymore.” No. He says you go back to the specific activity that caused you to stray on to the wrong path. We need to start there. With God, we always have to start at the beginning and deal with those problems first. So often we want to just start “from here.” We want to avoid those things in our past that are hurtful or uncomfortable. Especially those things that require us to “look in the mirror!” But God knows that we have to go back to the place where we first started to do things “our way” in order to deal with that before we can go on.
7. Repent – vs. 5 – This is always part of God’s plan for us. Whenever we screw up and do not follow God’s purpose for us, we need to repent. That means that we “STOP, DROP, and ROLL.” We STOP in our tracks, we DROP whatever it is we are doing, and then we ROLL in the opposite direction. To truly repent is to look at our activity as God does. That’s the hard part. Not because we can’t understand what God is thinking, it is because we don’t want to acknowledge what God believes when it requires us to give up something, even what it is harmful to us.
8. Do the Deeds – vs. – God never tells us to stop doing something without telling us what to do. He always gives us a better alternative that is ultimately for our good. Here He tells the church to “do what they did when they first fell in Love with Jesus.” How about you? Are you still doing those things you did when you first were a new Christian? Bible reading? Witnessing? Giving of yourself to God’s work? Tithing? Whatever it was, we need to return to those things that pleased God then.
9. Or else – vs. 5 – I remember my parents saying this to me so often. “You better do this or that ‘or else.’” Or else what? Well for me, it was always a whooping, grounding, or something just as bad. But for the church at Ephesus, it was to lose its usefulness in God’s work. How sad it would have been if this church had lost its effectiveness and was just a “social” place to gather. Do you know any churches like that today? Are we as a society guilty of becoming that way? How do we ensure that we do not fall into that kind of trap? These people were very good at some things but poor in other things. Don’t let Satan steal your place in God’s work by failing to do what God requires you to do.

So how are you doing with your repentance? Your deeds? Your or else? Are you ready to STOP, DROP, and ROLL?