

# August 2000: First Love

by Aaron Greenway

When addressing the seven churches in *Revelation*, Jesus speaks about different issues that pervaded the Church two millennia ago (and still does today). Some of these issues have to do with a compromising church, a corrupt church, a lukewarm church, and a dead church.

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**Nevertheless,  
I have this against you,  
that you have left  
your first love.  
(Rev 2:4)**

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Another church that Jesus dealt with was the church at Ephesus. He specifically says,

I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience; and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place — unless you repent

— Rev. 2:2–5

This passage suggests several different things. Have you ever heard it said by someone, “I love God. Look at all the things that I do for Him?” I think we actually believe that many times, that doing things for the Lord is exclusive to loving Him. We also have a tendency to lump fruit with service or that hatred of evil also means love of God. Of course, they should go together. Of course, correct doctrine ought to be upheld. Of course, we ought to serve in the Church. And of course the things that we do for the Lord are important.

What am I getting at? I am saying that our hearts can become so hardened and so unloving that we can actually use service as a means of masking our coldness. After all, our reputations are on the line, right? If we appear to be ungodly or unspiritual, then that is not in our favor, right? We

are then serving God based on the approval of others and not out of a heart of love for our Savior. Personally, I have fallen into this many times, where I fell in love with what I was doing for God and not God Himself. In this case, maybe we need to take a step back from our ministry. Perhaps, we need to get alone with God and learn what it is to fall in love with Him all over again. Let us remember that God does not call us to anything that distracts our attention away from Him, and Satan can use even the 'right' things to accomplish this.

Let us take the example of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38–42, where Jesus came over to these women's home. Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, listening to His words of wisdom. The other sister, Martha, was cooking and serving, probably because she thought that she was serving the Savior more by simply "doing things." Notice that Jesus did not downplay her service. Read His response to her complaint about her sister in verses 41-42, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:41-42). In the NIV (New International Version), verse 42 uses the words "Mary has chosen what is 'better'."

When our motivation is focused on doing rather than loving, then our doing is nothing more than a perversion, either laced with selfish motives or maybe just unawareness as the world has taught us that our worth comes from what we do. Each day of service must begin and end with God. It requires a filling of the Holy Spirit, a dying to self every day, and spending time seeking our Lord. Many of us Christians who have shirked our quiet times often sit back and wonder where our joy is. God is after our hearts. He wants intimacy, not just a list of accomplishments we can chalk up at the end of our lives.

The reason we get so worn out and feel like we are going through the motions is because we have lost sight of God in our venture to serve Him. We are required to serve and we are required to produce fruit and good works, as born-again believers, but never are we do this apart from or at the expense of our First Love. We can defend doctrines, beliefs, and we can participate in every spiritual function, and not love God. However, if we truly learn to fall in love with God, we can be assured that the things we do for Him will be from the heart and not simply because we are obligated. It isn't a matter of which is good and which is evil. It is a matter of keeping the right

perspective on what ought to come first.

Today, let us ask God to return to us our First Love, Jesus Christ, who loved us enough to die on the cross for us. What kind of love would suffer and die for us? What kind of Love would allow His heart to be broken? This Love had a oneness with His Father, an intimacy so deep and precious that Jesus prayed fervently that we would have the same! I choose today: My heart is with God. How about yours?