

# Revelation 2:1-8

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[0:00] Amen. Thank you very much for such a nice welcome and such a nice hospitality! I really feel like home. Maybe it's because I'm third time, but probably because it's church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Are there anyone in the room who were born in the 1970s? 1970s. Oh! 1970s.

Okay, okay. My dad was also born in the 1970s. In the 1970s, NASA launched a spacecraft called Voyager.

It was Voyager 1. It has something called a golden record. So what that meant was they had recordings in 55 languages of different sayings.

Then there was also recordings of different sounds of waves and different, like, child singing.

Different, different things were recorded and sent into space on that spacecraft in the 1970s.

[1:05] And Voyager traveled through millions and millions of miles away. And every day, NASA would wait for the pictures to come in because Voyager was taking pictures.

It was orbiting through space, billions of miles away. And NASA was waiting for that heartbeat from millions of miles away because they were learning.

Voyager was so helpful. They were discovering so much. Until one moment. The signal was lost. It was still orbiting in space.

Everything was great. It was somewhere there taking pictures. But the signal to the source was lost. As Christians, we may be serving. We may be going to Sunday school, the Sunday service, to even evening service.

We can serve. We can minister. We can read the Bible. We can still orbit. But the signal to the Savior might be lost.

[2:05] And everything else is meaningless. Oh, so many things can describe a believer. Holiness, fear of God, good fruits, character.

All that is good. However, the Bible is very clear that the signal to the Savior, to our Lord, has to be connected. All throughout the Bible, we see that.

In the law of Moses, what do we see? Love your God. We are connected to Jesus through our love to Him. The only way to be connected to Jesus is to love God.

I don't know if you have read one of the scariest passages in Deuteronomy. It's Deuteronomy 28, 47, 48. It's just two verses. I'll read it for you.

The Lord says, Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joyfulness and gladness of your heart, because of the abundance of all things, therefore you shall serve your enemies, whom the Lord will send against you.

[3:10] The Israelites had to serve God with joy and gladness. If not, they were promised curses. That's how important to God is this connection of love from us.

Later, the prophets called once again and again, Israel, come back to your first love to God. Later, Jesus, when He was challenged, what is the greatest commandment?

He said, what? Love the Lord your God with all your strength, mind, and heart. Love your God.

Later, when Peter was challenged, what did Jesus tell him?

Peter, do you love me? We say that very clearly. Nowhere in the Bible will you find that God will do this for you.

As Christians, we have a fight before us. We need to fight that our obedience will flow out of our love toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

[4:15] Today, as pastor was praying, I hope that God will use this sermon to challenge us, to warn us, because we are encountering one of the most scariest passages in the New Testament.

However, also one of the most comforting ones. If you can please open, if you have the Bible, Revelation chapter 2. The last book of the Bible.

Revelation chapter 2. Revelation chapter 2. And from verse 1. Only seven verses. So, Jesus, the exalted Lord of the church, is writing a letter to John, who's on Patmos.

And he wants him to send a letter to different churches, to seven churches in Asia Minor. That's modern Turkey. And the first one is Ephesus.

Ephesus was the closest one from John, from the sea. However, Ephesus also was the church that planted all other six churches.

[5:21] It's the mother church. Ephesus was the mother church for all other six. So, it's the core of Asia Minor. That's where everything started from. After Paul, the Apostle Paul ministered there, it says in Acts 19:10, And all Asia heard the word of the Lord.

That's how Ephesus ministered. Everyone knew about Jesus there. So, what happened? Forty years have passed. These on fire Christians, generations, they grew old.

New generation came, probably. And so, Jesus cares about churches so much that he writes them a letter. So, let's read the word of the Lord.

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write. The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

I know your works, your toil, and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false.

[6:38] I know you are enduring patiently, and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. But, I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

Remember, therefore, from where you have fallen. Repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you, and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

Yet this you have. You hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

To the one who conquers, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

Amen. This was the word of the Lord. So, first thing that we see here, right away, that Jesus knows. Jesus knows. He says in the verse 2, I know your works. So, it's written to the angel in Ephesus. Not to the angel of the Lord, but to the angel in Ephesus.

[7:50] Angelus, or angel, means the one who is sent. To the one who was sent to Ephesus. So, that's either a missionary, or a pastor, who would take the letter, and read it to the church. And from whom?

Jesus doesn't specify him here. He doesn't call himself by name, but he gives a description. What does he say about himself in verse 1? The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

The first chapter explains what that is. The golden lampstands are the churches. So, the golden lampstands is when, in the ancient times, people would see light.

And Jesus says, these are the churches, these are the light, like the words of Jesus in the Gospels. So, Jesus is still ministering to the churches. He's still walking, and taking care of them.

He didn't leave us orphans, and his eyes, he says in chapter 1, are like flames of fire. So, Jesus looks so closely to the churches, that he sees everything. He says, I know.

[8:54] And he even makes a huge list, of what he knows about the churches. What does he know about it? He knows the toil. I already said, the Ephesian church, they didn't look for the toil of other churches.

They didn't look for other fruits, or like take the Christians from one church to another. They were evangelizing as hard as they could. All Asia heard the word of the Lord.

What did they also do? They endured patiently. All seven churches in that time had huge, severe persecution. And they didn't say, I don't know Jesus.

They were patient. He also says, you did it for my name's sake. They didn't do it for fame. They did it for Jesus. So, he knows the obedience.

He even says, I know the works of Nicolaitans. Some say that's like local cult. This view has some supporters, but we don't have much support, to be very sure.

[9:57] The Bible doesn't explain what that was. The thing that we know is that Jesus likes that. He was on their side. He says, I know. So, for some of us, we need to remember this today.

Jesus notices my ministry. Jesus notices my life. For you, some of us are in college, and we have a temptation to cheat with AI, and Jesus knows when we don't.

He knows when we sweat, and we still write essay ourselves. He knows that. Jesus knows when we are preparing to greet people in the entry room.

He knows how our heart posture is. Jesus knows how much it took us to give to somebody. You know, Ukrainians sometimes joke that the currency has to be, or the dollar has to be a little wet when it costs us something.

Jesus notices that. Jesus notices when we don't make the clicks we are not supposed to make. Jesus knows when we are humbling ourselves and are not using the position we are in to raise somebody else up.

[11:12] Jesus notices. Feel the blink. Jesus notices because he sees everything. He still walks among the churches, amongst us, and notices everything we do.

He can make a list out of our lives, and he can say, Trey, Steven, Alex, Nadia, Tanya, Tracy, I know your works.

Don't look at others. Others may not notice you, but I notice. So everything was good. Jesus started from the compliment. However, he noticed a deadly cancer He noticed a huge disease that will kill if not cure.

He says, I know the verse 4, but I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

Jesus noticed that the way Christians in Ephesus were doing something was changed. as I was saying, as I was thinking of this sermon, tears rolled on my eyes.

[12:29] I was like, the Lord, an exalted Lord of the church, the one who says in chapter 1, I was dead, and now I'm alive forever. Those who died for the Christians, this Lord that died for the Christians, the one who was omnipotent omnipotent and limited himself, the one who was omnipresent and limited himself and died and was shamefully in the tomb with human body, has to say that he noticed that the love is cooling.

It wasn't like that before. It was better. You know, when, like a rock, when it falls from the mountain, it gains speed and then it just crashes. He noticed that their love, the feeling they have toward him, toward the very person, he noticed something very bad.

Jesus knows if you don't have the first love. However, he gives a very good instruction.

I'll say more on that in just a minute. So, first Jesus knows and then he doesn't just open the wound, he gives an instruction how to cure the wound. Second, Jesus instructs.

Jesus instructs. So, what does he say? Verse 5. First, he says, remember from where you have fallen. He calls this drift a fall.

[14:02] Remember the Genesis default? And he says, remember. Many times when we fall away from being close with God is because we fail to remember and focus on Jesus.

So, first he says, remember. Remember what excitement you had when Sunday morning came.

Remember when Sunday evening service came and you were like, oh, I'm going to church, are you going with me?

Remember the passion you had to read God's word. what about now? Do you have five minutes, 15 minutes for God every day at least? What about your prayer?

Just honestly, do you really pray at all or is it just on Sundays? Remember the excitement that you had when the opportunity to serve came.

Remember, remember and remember. Remembering won't help. Second word is repent. The word that is used for the sinners is used to the church.

[15:14] Remembering won't help. You have to repent. You have to get to God and say, I am so sorry. God, please break my cold heart.

This cold obedience will ruin my Christianity. You know, cold obedience is like, for instance, if a husband asks a wife, give me that sucker and she's like, she doesn't listen to him and he's like, give me that sucker and she's like, ah, he wants to like stab him with it.

Here you go. God doesn't need those cold obediences. His heart feels it right away. When we are approaching ministry and life and our work and our education, wherever we are, and we don't approach it, we have the feeling that, God, I love you.

I want to choose your side. I want to choose your solution. This is the very offense against Jesus Christ. Christ. And he calls it to repent.

You have to repent. You know, when I was, when I was in Ukraine, I was there until 10 years old, and at 10, my family immigrated to the United States.

[16 : 38] And you know what shocked me the most? It wasn't the freeways. It wasn't the big meals that Americans have that a couple people can share and still be very stuffed afterwards. It was, you know what?

It was Coke. In Ukraine, what people would do is they will have homemade juice and some cheaper soda.

Coca-Cola is only like a couple times a year for big celebration. And I was like, I want to take a little more. And when we came here, Coke was everywhere.

Every picnic, every church meal, every family meal, Coke is there. Any coffee shop you would go to, even probably coffee shops, have Coke.

And you know what? In World Trace, we were just in Dollar General, and I was, I like Coke so much that after we bought it, I was like, I want to make a photo shoot.

[17 : 40] Here is by the Dollar General, here it's in the car in my hands, here it's in the package, here it's in the cup holder, and here it's by World Trace.

Isn't it awesome? Like, even the design, it's just, you can already feel how good it is. However, telling about Coke is not the same as actually taking it to your hands and holding it, wouldn't you agree?

Here's Coke. Do any of you else like Coke? I have my friends here, so even holding it, look at that. Any of you want to drink it already? But that won't compare with actually opening it. drinking it. Did you know that manufacturers have in Coca-Cola even have the person that checks the packages of Coca-Cola if they have this sound?

And even this sound won't compare with actually drinking it. you know, this is how we are to think about Jesus.

[19 : 02] He has to be our joy, our life, our passion, our purpose and direction in life. Remember when you had this first taste of your God.

Where is it right now? He feels it and we have to fight. Will you fight to obey in love? Obedience only in love.

Only that is acceptable to God. Everything else, He will say the same, but I have this against you. You have the obedience but where is your love?

Where is your heart? Where is your joy? So first He says remember repent. And what does He say next?

The instruction, last instruction. Notice that He doesn't say repent and come back to your first love. No. He says repent and do the works you did at first.

[20 : 07] Return to love-driven works. Love-driven works, first works are only possible with first love. love. Evangelism that is praising God is only pleasant to God with first love.

Giving is only pleasant to Jesus with praising His name. Everything else is only with first love. Otherwise, eh, I feel, I feel that.

You know, like, imagine a husband or a boyfriend that never gave flowers to his wife for a couple of years. And here, he knocks on the door with flowers, and his wife comes up, comes out.

And she's first shocked, and then she's like, why would you give me flowers? And if he would say, because I've read in the book, what do you think she would do?

She would say, I don't need that. Keep it to yourself. Don't worry about that. What kind of book did you read? So what does this husband need to do? He will need to go, repent, pray, repent again, go, knock on the door again, and when she opens, he needs to say, these flowers are for you because I love you.

[21 : 36] And this is what will bring joy to her heart. Same with our lives. We have to fight that our obedience won't become just a routine, that our prayer, that our service, that our ministry to others won't be cold.

So first, Jesus knows, then Jesus instructs, and lastly, Jesus calls. What does he say?

he says from verse seven, he who has an ear, let him hear. This is the phrase that echoes the Old Testament prophets.

Whenever they would say that, it will mean that this message will either help to one category of people and will blind the others. So what does he say next?

let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches, to the one who conquers. Conquer was, the word was used only to military, athletes, and it's used to the church.

[22:46] We have to fight. The one who conquers, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God. Do you remember that about the fall?

That the love, remember from where you have fallen is the fall, how it echoes Eden. So where we have lost our first love to God, the Yahweh, is when we doubted his goodness.

And when Eve took of the tree of life and gave it to Adam, this is where the fall happened. And now, the second Adam, to the ones who will, to the end of their lives, love their Lord Jesus Christ, do the works of love, those will receive the fruit of life from the second Adam, from Jesus Christ.

However, there is a warning in verse 5. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place unless you repent.

sadly, Ephesus is gone. Today, nothing but the ruins can be found. It was so seriously, there is no more church anymore, no more even city.

[24:17] Even today, it's very easy to do it for God. What he can do is, if the church doesn't repent from the feelings toward the Savior, he can take those who actually serve with love toward him and take them to different churches.

It may be a little time span. Or, there are many examples in history and even today where there was a godly pastor and the congregation would just be so hard that he would not be able to do anything with them and God will do this supernatural circumstance, the pastor will just move and the church will just be a desolation, sadly.

You know, many people today think about what is love. Christians think, oh, it's only action. The world says, oh, it's only feeling.

If you don't feel it, divorce and go on. The truth is in the middle. It's both the feeling and the action. And we see it very clearly here.

our God is a jealous God, the Bible says. I want to call those of us, all of us, actually, to pray.

[25:43] Just right now, you and your God and God speak to him and say, search me, oh God. Lead me to the way everlasting. Like David prayed.

Do I have first love? What about my actions? Are they really from the feeling that you love me first, God, and I want to love you back?

Maybe you're like that Voyager. You're orbiting in space. It looks like you're alive. You're taking pictures. You're doing something. However, it's a burden. if you're connected to the source, the worship won't be just words.

The ministry will be a joy. For instance, I was with Stephen and Seal a couple days, and I love when Stephen says, I wait for the pictures of the projects I try to support.

I want to see the videos of how they're doing. And he says it with passion. You can't try to act it out. I wish that God forbid that this church would cease to exist.

[26:59] I wish that it will be until the rapture, until when we see our Lord Jesus face to face, and he will say, you love me. You did the works of the first love.

It was hard at times, but you endured, and I don't have anything against you. Good and faithful servant. Amen? I invite you to take right now a moment of silence, and just pray, God, search my heart.

And if you need to repent, repent. There is a pastor here, if you need to repent right now, do it.

Maybe there are those also who never have experienced God's love, never have loved them, know that he loves you so much.

You only have to love him back. He loved you first. After the service, or right now, don't postpone it. He is waiting for you.

Amen? Amen. Amen. Heavenly Father, Heavenly Father, it took Ephesians only about 40 years that you needed to talk to them.

[28:21] Some of us have been Christians for only four years, and we need a letter too. Sorry for the times that we were just orbiting, we were just doing something automatically, technically, but our hearts were so far, we were not interested in loving you back.

back. We want to see your joy. We want to serve you with gladness. Help us to love you with our first love.

You deserve it. Amen. Amen. In the end, I would like to read just one last passage from Revelation 19, if you can open the Bible with me.

Revelation 19, from verse 7. Revelation 19, verses from 7 to 9. Revelation 19, 7.

Let us rejoice and exult, and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. It was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure, for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

[29 : 44] And the angel said to me, write this, blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. In the very near future, God will symbolically marry the church.

May God help us to love him today. Amen. Amen. may may