

Doctrine of First Love

Revelation 2:4

*“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee,
because thou hast left thy first love.”*

1. The primary charge against the church of Ephesus was that during their spiritual journey of grace they had left their first love. They had left Christ.
2. The reference to “*first love*” is not a reference to loving Christ first in time but loving Him first and foremost throughout time.
3. The Lord God is a jealous God and tolerates no rivals. The first commandment demands there be no other gods put before Him.
 - *Exodus 20:3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*
 - *Exodus 34:14 For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God:*
4. The church of Ephesus deliberately left the Lord which means there was a conscious decision not to give Him the pre-eminence in their hearts and lives. The people stopped seeking first the kingdom and righteousness of God.
 - *Matthew 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*
5. The tragedy of this condemnation by Christ against the church of Ephesus becomes all the more pronounced when the rich spiritual legacy of the assembly is considered.
 - The church had been established by Paul who conducted the longest of his city ministries totaling two years and nine months. *Acts 19:8 And he [Paul] went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. 9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. 10 And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.*

- The church had been pastored by Timothy. *1 Timothy 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope; 2 Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. 3 As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine,*
 - To this church Paul addressed one of his epistles. *Ephesians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:*
6. Unfortunately the people of Ephesus were faced with many temptations to capture their attention and distract them from spiritual priorities.
 - There was financial temptation. Ephesus enjoyed great prosperity under Rome during the first and second centuries AD, when the city must have had a population of about a half million. *1 Timothy 6:9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.*
 - There was religious temptation towards idolatry for the Ephesians worshiped the Asiatic goddess Artemis, or Diana whose temple became one of the Seven Wonders of the World. After the temple was destroyed by fire (356 B.C.), it was immediately rebuilt. It is said that some of the magnificent columns are incorporated into the Church of St. Sophia.
 - There was doctrinal temptation illustrated in the Nestorian heresy, which taught that there were two separate persons, one divine and one human, in the person of Jesus Christ.
 7. Enough people in the local assembly succumbed to one or all of these temptations and perhaps others as well. They left Christ.
 8. Because of the principle that grace precedes judgment, the Lord gave the people time and opportunity to repent.