

Keep Your First Love (By Rev. Anthony Menzel, March 14, 2021)

Revelation 2:1-5, 7

2 "To the [a]angel of the church of Ephesus write,

'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: 2 "I know your works, your labor, your [b]patience, and that you cannot [c]bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; 3 and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. 4 Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. 5 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. 6 But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

7 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." '

***To have the Lord Jesus as your first love means not only to love Him in the sense of thinking well of Him and wanting to please Him...

To have the Lord Jesus as your first love means to be in love with Him...

***Being in love with the Lord Jesus means that your first priority in prayer is not to ask Him for anything; it's simply to enjoy His company...

Luke 7:36-50

³⁶ Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. ³⁷ And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that *Jesus* sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, ³⁸ and stood at His feet behind *Him* weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped *them* with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed *them* with the fragrant oil. ³⁹ Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw *this*, he spoke to himself, saying, "This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman *this is* who is touching Him, for she is a sinner."

⁴⁰ And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you."

So he said, "Teacher, say it."

⁴¹"There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴²And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?"

⁴³Simon answered and said, "I suppose the *one* whom he forgave more."

And He said to him, "You have rightly judged." ⁴⁴Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped *them* with the hair of her head. ⁴⁵You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. ⁴⁶You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. ⁴⁷Therefore I say to you, her sins, which *are* many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loves little."

⁴⁸Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

⁴⁹And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

⁵⁰Then He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

This nameless woman did not ask the Lord Jesus for anything. All she did was give Him a costly gift of oil and kiss His feet...

In contrast, many people just come to the Lord Jesus to ask Him for blessings, but they don't realize that the main blessing available to them is the Holy Trinity...

Luke 17:11-16

¹¹Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. ¹²Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. ¹³And they lifted up *their* voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

¹⁴So when He saw *them*, He said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed.

¹⁵And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, ¹⁶and fell down on *his* face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan.

¹⁷ So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where *are* the nine? ¹⁸ Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" ¹⁹ And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well."

The kingdom of God would be advanced a lot more if more people were grateful...

If more people would keep following after the Lord Jesus once they received their blessings...

Our church, for example, would have probably twice or three times as many people if everyone who has been blessed by the church would be faithful in attending, let alone in inviting other people to church...

So many more people could have been saved by the Lord Jesus...

That is part of why I am receiving this message...

I feel the Holy Spirit telling me that we have to pray not only that people receive the Lord Jesus and go to heaven but also that they fall in love with the Lord Jesus...

***This message was inspired by a conversation between my wife and my assistant pastors...

They were talking about how my mother got delivered at a retreat many years ago...

I believe it was my wife who mentioned that when you first get saved, you do whatever it takes to stay clean before the Lord...

You don't want anything coming between you and Him...

I was really blessed when she said that I still have my first love for the Lord Jesus...

To be honest, that is what I want most...Is to make the Lord Jesus feel loved by what I do, say, think, and feel...

No one is perfect, but I try my best to make Him feel good with my disinterested love every day...

I seek His blessings, but even more than His blessings, I just seek to be with Him...

And if He doesn't bless me, I still want to be with Him...

I can even get frustrated with His plan, but that does not mean that I don't want to be with Him...

The more time I spend with Him, the more I want to spend time with Him...

This personal testimony brings me to some important points about keeping your first love:

***To keep your first love, you are very careful about criticizing what may be God working...

You will be very careful about criticizing ministers, for example...

You might say that you don't agree that something that they do, such as not opening a church to help people following a natural disaster, is not something that you feel is from God, but you are going to be careful to say that something is simply from the devil...

Matthew 12:22-32

²²Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the ^[d]blind and mute man both spoke and saw. ²³And all the multitudes were amazed and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"

²⁴Now when the Pharisees heard *it* they said, "This *fellow* does not cast out demons except by ^[e]Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons."

²⁵But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. ²⁶If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? ²⁷And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? Therefore they shall be your judges. ²⁸But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. ³⁰He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.

The Unpardonable Sin

³¹"Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy *against* the Spirit will not be forgiven men. ³²Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the *age* to come.

***To keep your first love, you will keep yourself not only clean, but you will also fill yourself up with the Holy Spirit so that evil cannot enter into your life again...

Matthew 12:43-45

⁴³“When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. ⁴⁴Then he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when he comes, he finds *it* empty, swept, and put in order. ⁴⁵Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation.”

***To keep your first love, you will do whatever it takes to be close the Lord Jesus, including making sacrifices for Him...

You may not always want to do something...

It may take time and effort to do something, but you do it anyway because you love the Lord Jesus...

John 21:15-19

¹⁵So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, *son* of ^[b]Jonah, do you love Me more than these?”

He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I ^[e]love You.”

He said to him, “Feed My lambs.”

¹⁶He said to him again a second time, “Simon, *son* of ^[e]Jonah, do you love Me?”

He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I ^[e]love You.”

He said to him, “Tend My sheep.”

¹⁷He said to him the third time, “Simon, *son* of ^[e]Jonah, do you ^[a]love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?”

And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.”

Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep. ¹⁸Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry *you* where you do not wish.” ¹⁹This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “Follow Me.”

Pastoring a church is not always easy...

It brings a lot of joy and satisfaction, but it also requires time and effort...

Sometimes there are a lot of challenges...

However, if I have been called to be a pastor, I fulfill that calling because I am in love with the Lord Jesus...

Luke 9:23-25

²³Then He said to *them* all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross ^[b]daily, and follow Me. ²⁴For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. ²⁵For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? ²⁶For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His *own* glory, and *in His* Father's, and of the holy angels. ²⁷But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God."

When you are in love with the Lord Jesus, you will make any sacrifice He asks you to make, even if it's what you love the most...

Genesis 22:1-19

22 Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!"

And he said, "Here I am."

²Then He said, "Take now your son, your only *son* Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

³So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. ⁴Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. ⁵And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the ^[a]lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you."

⁶So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid *it* on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. ⁷But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!"

And he said, "Here I am, my son."

Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where *is* the ^[b]lamb for a burnt offering?"

⁸And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together.

⁹Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. ¹⁰And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

¹¹But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!"

So he said, "Here I am."

¹²And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only *son*, from Me."

¹³Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind *him* was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴And Abraham called the name of the place, ☐The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said *to* this day, "In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided."

¹⁵Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, ¹⁶and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only *son*— ¹⁷blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. ¹⁸In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." ¹⁹So Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.

God hates human sacrifice...

He would never want us to sacrifice our children to Him...

I believe God tested Abraham in this way to show how in love God wants us to be with Him...

He wants us to be willing to give up anything He asks us for...

God will often ask us to give up one of our favorite blessings, at least in part, to help us keep our first love for the Lord Jesus...

It generally does not involve a request as extreme as what He asked Abraham to do, but it can still be difficult for our flesh...

Rev. Luís had to give up being so involved in soccer...

I have to give up some of my time with Gabriela to be able to prepare messages and minister to others...

*****To keep our first love, we must give the Lord Jesus our best...*****

Genesis 4:3-5

³And ☐in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. ⁴Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, ⁵but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

Abel's offering was the best he could give...

Cain gave something, but God did not accept it because it was not His best...

When we are truly in love with the Lord Jesus, giving Him our time is a pleasure...

Psalm 1:1-3

Blessed *is* the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ^(a)ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
²But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he ^(b)meditates day and night.

³He shall be like a tree
Planted by the ^(c)rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper.

When you are in love with the Lord Jesus, it is fun to study His Word...

Psalm 40:8

I delight to do Your will, O my God,
And Your law *is* within my heart."

When you are in love with the Lord Jesus, it is fun to put His Word into practice...

It is fun to do His Will...

This includes praying...

And praying includes all different types of prayer...

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

***When we are in love with the Lord Jesus, we are quick to admit that we are wrong...

There is no room for pride in our lives...

2 Chronicles 7:13-14

¹³When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, ¹⁴if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

A person who is in love with the Lord Jesus will recognize that even if they did not participate directly in a given sin, they probably did not do everything in their power to keep it from happening...

They remember that there are not only sins of commission but also sins of omission, and because of this fact, they are always ready to repent...

James 4:17

¹⁷Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do *it*, to him it is sin.

A perfect example is the abortion issue...

I may have never been directly involved in an abortion, but have I been praying about abortion since I got saved? Have I been signing petitions and attending rallies? Have I been helping unwed mothers? There are so many things that I could have done and didn't do, that I definitely can humble myself and repent on behalf of the nation when it comes to the murder of innocent children through this racist practice that was designed from its inception to kill off Black, immigrant, and poor children...