

Dear Friend,

The church of Ephesus was one of the strongest, most mature churches mentioned in the Bible. Even in the book of Revelation, the Lord Himself commends that church in many ways.

Revelation 2:1-3 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; (2) I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: (3) And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

Jesus Himself says the church at Ephesus was a hard-working church that would not put up with "so-called" apostles who preached false doctrine. They highly respected the name of Jesus and were steadfast for the truth and labored long and hard for the gospel. That sounds like a really good church! But Jesus continues and points out a serious error that the church at Ephesus was making.

Revelation 2:4 Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

Jesus does not say they no longer loved Him. He says they have "left" their first love. The Greek word translated "left" in that verse includes the meanings of, "to let alone, to leave, to lay aside." They were obviously very busy laboring to do the Lord's work, but they had gotten so busy working "for" the Lord, they were in fact "ignoring" the Lord by not spending time with Him. The Lord tells them plainly ... He does not accept hard work as a valid substitute for time spent in fellowship with Him.

Personally, I find this to be a tendency I have to fight myself. I was raised to have a very strong work ethic. I am a hard worker. I love to work. I also love the Lord. But I find that I tend to make the same mistake as the Ephesians. I get so busy working "for" the Lord that I neglect to spend adequate time "with" the Lord. There is a line in a popular worship song that jars me every time I hear it. "*I don't want to talk about You like You are not in the room.*" I sometimes get so busy working for the Lord that I forget ... HE IS IN THE ROOM WITH ME!

I'm not even talking about praying in the Spirit. At this stage in my life, I pretty much pray without ceasing. If I am not talking, eating, or sleeping ... I am constantly praying in the Spirit very softly. There is great benefit to praying without ceasing, which is not the topic of this letter. I am talking about more than prayer. I am talking about walking and talking with Him "like He is in the room." Being constantly aware that He is with us. It is more than being in the Word, fasting, prayer, and even worship. The best word to describe what I am talking about is fellowship! From the Lord's point of view, being busy for Him, but spending no time with Him,

is a "fallen" state.

Revelation 2:5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

He doesn't mean they are lost. He means they have taken a step lower than where they were before. He is saying, substituting work for fellowship with Him is a lower walk than they first had with Him. His solution? Repent and do the first works!

When someone truly falls in love, they have that person on their mind all the time. Even while they are doing their work where they are employed, they are constantly thinking of their sweetheart, and they can hardly wait to be in the presence of their lover again. This is the first work we all experienced when we were first saved. I remember so well those first days. I would have spent all my time with Him if that had been possible.

We are living in perilous times. In order to fulfill all He has called us to do in this generation, it is imperative that we "return to our first love." Yes, we are to work and labor hard for the kingdom of God. But our "First Love" is calling us to never get so busy "for" Him that we have no time to spend "with" Him. He is in the room with us. Let us never treat Him like He is not. He promises that if we overcome "busy-ness" and spend time with Him ... we shall always dine from the Tree of Life.

Revelation 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Your friend and co-laborer,

GARY