LOVELESS ORTHODOXY

 **DATE: 5/20/2018 am**

**TEXT: Revelation 2:1-7**

**INTRODUCTION**

When Pastors first enter the Ministry, they have all kinds of unrealistic expectations

They are going to turn the world upside down for Jesus

They are going to build the biggest church and win the most people (ever)

They are going to earnestly contend for the faith

They are going to do everything just Right

But when it doesn’t … turn out like they thought

They begin to get a critical spirit

It becomes the people’s fault

-- They are never Faithful enough

-- They don’t take the preaching serious enough

-- Their theology is never right enough

-- Their practices are not biblical enough

Pastors who get to this point, will lose their joy, their unity and lose the capacity to love the church family

The Christian in the pew is not exempt from these same unrealistic expectation

When they join a church, they think their presence will make it the greatest church ever

They Love Theology, listening to good preaching

They read all the books, follow all the blogs

Read their Bibles and pray, they are involved in the church

And that’s great too, isn’t it?

All God’s people should love theology and grow from good preaching!

But if that were me, rather than loving my church and my pastor,

I’d be prone to develop an idea of what my church and my pastor should be

I would have my own preconceived ideas

If I were honest, I’d admit that I would rather be a member of some other church (fill in the blank)

And when that happens, we are likely to develop a critical spirit

-- The preaching at my church will never be faithful enough

-- The theology at my church will never be right enough

-- The practices of my church will never be biblical enough

-- The music in the church will never we spiritual enough

When church members become so critical, their pastor can never win

But what they don’t realize is, neither will they

Church members like that, lose joy; they lose unity; and they too will lose the capacity to love the church family God has surrounded them with

So, what is all of this? It is “Loveless Orthodoxy”

**Orthodoxy** is – *the authorized or generally accepted theology, doctrines, and practices of Christianity*

The Jewish Pharisees practiced Loveless Orthodoxy

**Luke 11:42 –** ***“But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, (but) pass over (justice) and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone”***

It is a Love of the Truth without a Love for God

That’s what we find Jesus relating to John here in our text this morning

So, what is the Danger in Loveless Orthodoxy?

Let’s pray and find out

**~~~Prayer~~~**

First, let’s look at …

**I. THEIR “REPUTATION” - vs. 2, 3, 6**

Jesus Examines the church at Ephesus

Ephesus was an important city for several reasons

-- It was important **Commercially**

Just up river from the Aegean Sea, a bustling seaport

Thriving financially

-- It was important **Politically**

It was a Free city, Rome wasn’t breathing down their necks

-- It was important **Religiously** (not in a good way)

It was the center of the worship of Diana

So, it was an ideal spot for a Gospel Church

The Bible has a lot to say about the Church at Ephesus

It was a thriving Church

Timothy was the first pastor of this church - **I Tim. 1:3**

The Apostle John pastored this church later, until his exile

Jesus begins His remarks to this church by Commending them

**Commend** – *to acknowledge someone’s good works*

The Church at Ephesus had a Reputation – a Good Name

Let’s look at some of the Commendations Jesus makes

**A. He Commends them for their ‘Service’ – v. 2 a**

***“I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience”***

Jesus uses 3 words to describe the Service of this church

**1.** Works – It’s referring to the fact that this church has accomplished a lot for the glory of God

**2.** Labor - They were actively serving the Lord at great personal expense and sacrifice

**3.** Patience - It tells us that this church was working in spite of opposition

These folks were **‘Serving’** the Lord

**B. He Commends them for their ‘Separation’ – v. 2 b**

**“*canst not bear them which are evil*”**

This church was living a Separated life

The immorality and evil that defined their world was not a part of their lives

They took a stand on the side of morality and they lived differently than the world around them

In our walk, our talk, our dress, our choices of entertainment, and in every area of life, we are commanded to be different from the lost world around us

We are told in **II Cor. 6:17** to ***“come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord”***

**C. He Commends them for their ‘Standards’ – vs. 2 c, 6**

These people are praised because they held fast to correct Doctrine

When people passed through their town claiming to be men of God, they put them to the test

They checked out their credentials and they examined their preaching

If what they said did not line up with the Word of God,

They wouldn’t have them

The Ephesian believers refused to allow false doctrine to exist in their fellowship – **Acts 17:11**

**D. He Commends them for their ‘Steadfastness’ – v. 3**

***“And hast borne, and hast patience, and for My Name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted”***

**Steadfast** means – *Loyal, Faithful, Committed, Devoted, Dedicated, Dependable, Reliable, Steady, True, Constant, Staunch, Solid, Trusty*

This is a church that has been carrying the load …

***“borne”*** means *to bear something*

They were Enduring a lot of affliction and opposition

Laboring to the point of exhaustion and …

They had done so, without any signs of weariness …

***“and hast not fainted”***

They were a very Steadfast congregation

And, what they did, they did for the sake of the Lord

On the surface, the church at Ephesus is what every church should strive to be

We should be busy for the Lord

We should live out the command of **I Corinthians 15:58 -**

**“*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord*”**

Do these verses describe our church?

Do these verses describe your life?

On the surface the Church at Ephesus looked like a Great Church

**THEIR “REPUTATION”**

Next, let’s Look at …

**II. THE “REALITY” - v. 4**

After offering this church some *words of Commendation*

Jesus now gives them some *words of Complaint*

**A. His ‘Disappointment’ – v. 4 a**

***“Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee”***

While they looked good on the surface, there were problems in the heart that had to be dealt with

Jesus let them know that this is a personal matter

It seems that He is grieved by a problem He sees in this church

We need to understand that Jesus sees what we do,

But He also sees who we are

He is able to look beneath the surface of our lives and see the condition of our hearts

Maybe somethings that we are not even aware of

We don’t see it in our own life

 When He finds error and sin in our hearts, it grieves Him

And it hinders our ability to enjoy His fellowship and His blessings

When we allow the wrong kind of things to linger in our hearts, it Disappoints Him

**Ephesians 4:30 – *“And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption”***

We need to get those things out

**B. The ‘Diagnosis – v. 4 b**

He tells us what that thing is

The Lord now gives them the Diagnosis

**A Diagnosis** is *the identification of the nature of an illness or other problem by examination of the symptoms*

***“because thou hast left thy first love”***

Jesus looks at these people whom He loves, and for whom He died, and tells them that they simply do not love Him like they used to

They still have love, but the deep, fervent, burning love that filled them with a passion to serve Him has left their hearts

They love their Church; but they to do not love Him like they used to

They love their Doctrine; but they have lost their passion for Jesus

They love their Ministry; but they are not motivated in that Ministry by a passionate love for Jesus

They are busy, but their hearts no longer burn for Him

They have “***left their first love***”

What is First Love?

It is the Love you felt for God because you realized that He Loved you

**I John 4:19 –** ***“We love Him, because He first loved us”***

That First Love is realizing that Jesus gave His Life that you might have Eternal Life, yet not deserving of it

You see, the Christian life is basically a love affair with the Lord Jesus Christ

-- Getting saved is falling in love with Him

-- Growing in Grace is falling deeper in love with Him

This love is the motive for all we do in His Name

Whether we sing, teach, preach, witness, give, etc,

It must all flow out of an ever-deepening love for the Lord Jesus

If we lose our love for Him, then our service means nothing – **I Cor. 13:1-3**

Jesus tells this Church that they have “***left their first love***”

**THEIR “REPUTATION”**

**THE “REALITY”**

**III. THE “REMEDY” – v. 5**

Jesus has not come to Hurt them; He has come to Help them!

He’s offered a *word of Commendation*, a *word of Complain*t,

Now He speaks a *word of Correction*

He tells them how they can fix that which is wrong in their church (He tells them 4 things)

**A. He Speaks of ‘Remembering’ – v. 5 a**

***“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen”***

Jesus calls on these people to look back

He wants them to remember that moment when they first came to know Him

He wants them to reflect on what He did for them

 He wants them to recall all the excitement and emotion of those early days of their salvation

He wants them to look back to a time when their love for Him motivated everything they did

Some of us need to remember

We have been saved so long that we have lost the thrill of those early days

The first step in Revival is **‘Remembering’**

**B. He Speaks of ‘Repenting’ – v. 5 b** (end of verse also)

***“and repent,” “except thou repent”***

We need to agree with God that there is definitively something wrong

And then change the way we are thinking

We need to see it has God sees it

The word “***repent***” speaks of *a change of mind that leads to a change of action*

Jesus is telling these people that they need to repent of the sin of not loving Him like they should

They need to search their hearts and change their attitude toward the Lord

The same counsel needs to be heeded by the modern churches today

We have allowed everything in the world to come before the Lord

Family, fun, work, even church work has all taken His place in our hearts

We need to get back to our altars, reclaim that emotional, extravagant First Love and fall head over heels in love with Jesus again

How long has it been since you confessed a lack of burning love for the Lord?

Have you even confessed Him at all?

**C. He Speaks of ‘Repeating’ – v. 5 c**

***“and do the first works”***

They are told to start doing the things they used to do once again

That is the key for their Revival and it is the key for us as well

We need to get back to the first works; back to reading the Bible; back to praying; back to witnessing; back to testifying; back to crying; back to praising His name;

We need to get back to the things that marked us when we were deeply in love with Jesus

Today might be a good day to start

Then lastly …

**D. He Speaks of ‘Removing’ – v. 5 d**

***“or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of His place”***

If they refuse to get where they needed to be,

Jesus tells them that He is willing to extinguish their candle

And that is exactly what happened at Ephesus!

They failed to heed the message and He took away their light

Now, there is no great Christian work in that city

 There is nothing there but ruins and rubble

**Ill.** When a Light Bulb goes out in your house you remove it. When you change it, you are going to throw the old one out. Why? It’s Useless! A light that won’t shine is not worth having around.

When a church stops shining in love for Jesus; when they stop being a bright light for the Lord

The Lord simply removes Himself

A Church without Jesus, is no longer a Church

I don’t want God to take away what we have

I don’t want Cornerstone Bible Baptist to become like so many other churches in the world today

But, if we fall out of love with Him and continue in that state,

The day will come when He will take what we do have

And He will give it to those who will use it for His glory

Mark it down!

**THEIR “REPUTATION”**

**THE “REALITY”**

**THE “REMEDY”**

**IV. THE “REWARDS” - v. 7**

We have heard our Lord’s words of *Commendation,* *Complaint* and *Correction*

In this final verse, He closes with words of *Consolation*

There is hope

**A. The Reward that is ‘Available’ – v. 7 a, b**

***“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches;” … To him that overcometh”***

The “***overcomer***” is the one who obeys by Faith

He seems to be saying that there will be some in the church of Ephesus who will hear and heed the message

And there will be those who won’t

There will be folks who will seek the Lord’s face, fall in love with Him again and be restored to that place of intimacy and fellowship

This Reward is available to all who will seek it

**B. This Reward is ‘Amazing’ – v. 7 b**

***“… will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God”***

Those who overcome will be able to experience something that other believers will miss out on

They will get to eat from the tree of life

When Adam sinned in Eden, he was cast out of the garden to prevent him from eating from this tree

**Genesis 3:22-24** …

 Those who live their life head over heels in love with Jesus will get to taste the fruit of that tree

They, along with all other believers, have eternal life already

This is a special gift to the ones who truly love Him

Jesus seems to be saying that those who love Him the most now, will enjoy Heaven the most

I want all I can get both here and hereafter

How about you?

**CONCLUSION**

I want you to be honest with yourself, and with the Lord

Have you left your first love? That Dangerous!

Are you busy, but busy out of duty and not out of love?

Can you honestly say that you are filled with fervent, emotional, extravagant love for Jesus?

Or, would you have to say that your heart has gotten cold;

That your zeal is not what it used to be; that you need to Remember, Repent and Repeat the first works?

If He has touched your heart, you need to let Him deal with you

The time is now and the place is here

**THEIR “REPUTATION”**

**THE “REALITY”**

**THE “REMEDY”**

**THE “REWARDS”**