

Revive Us Again

Part 3 – Return to First Love

September 21, 2014

What revival looks like

- is not about following a creed with more enthusiasm
- is about falling more deeply in love with the Savior Himself
- it may come in a different way than we had anticipated

The church of Ephesus

Revelation 2:1-7

- the church is about 40-yrs-old, under great persecution
- they work, labor, persevere, don't put up with evil, test false apostles, they are patient
- they labor for Christ's Name, don't become weary, hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans
- SOUND IN DOCTRINE, ACTIVE IN SERVICE, AND MORAL IN CONDUCT!

Indictment of church of Ephesus

With so much right — why does Jesus have a staggering indictment of them?

- they had left their first love — their hearts were not right
- Jesus was left behind in their pursuit of Christianity
- they had satisfied themselves that Christian doctrines, Christian service, and Christian morals were enough
- they had forgotten that Jesus was most interested in their hearts, not just their heads and hands
- they had forgotten the one thing necessary is for us to be in His Presence (Luke 10:38-42)
- some similarities between the Ephesians and the Pharisees — they were doctrinally right, but both missed Jesus
- Jesus told the Pharisees that they were searching the Scriptures, but He was with them. (John 5:39-40)
- LIFE, REVIVAL, RESURRECTION IS OBTAINED BY COMING TO JESUS HIMSELF!

The late, great A. W. Tozer said, “the greatest threat to Christianity isn't liberal theology, it's dead orthodoxy.” This is right beliefs, and right actions WITHOUT Jesus.

We, like the Ephesians, are on our way to dead orthodoxy if we content ourselves with Christian doctrine, service, and morals, without a passionate love for Jesus Himself.

Christ's loving rebuke

- remember from where you have fallen
- remember “our introduction, courtship, wedding, honeymoon — when I was your ‘First Love’”

- remember from where you have fallen — “I do!”
- this departure from God Himself while being involved in religious life is an ancient problem
- the Lord says, I remember the love of your betrothal, when you went after Me in the wilderness (Jeremiah 1:1-2)
- “I remember your kindness, love, and pursuit of Me.” — God

Christ’s simple solution

- repent — He says it twice — acknowledge what has happened, confess its folly, turn back to Me!
- Unusual Altar Call — to those who are doctrinally sound, actively serving, morally pure — needing to repent

Christ’s simple instruction

- do the first works — because they defined the first love
- what were they?
- Acts 19 tells of the birth of the Ephesus church, the first love attitudes they had, and needed to return to

Acts 19:1-3 — they were honest about their current spiritual condition

- they admitted they did not know about the Holy Spirit
- our first work is to be honest about our current level of power and life from the Holy Spirit

Acts 19:4-5 — they were teachable and responsive to further instruction

- they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus
- they were humble receivers and doers of the Word
- they were not argumentative
- are we more committed to our own personal bias, rather than the clear teaching of Jesus — especially on the issue of the Holy Spirit

Acts 19:6 — they were open and receptive to the Holy Spirit

- when Paul laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them
- they were open to more of Jesus, they did not resist
- in the last days, there will be a form of godliness, but denying and resisting the power of God
- it was to this very church that Paul would later write to tell them to “be continually filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18)
- being open and receptive to the Holy Spirit is a first work the church must return to, otherwise flirt with dead orthodoxy

Acts 19:17 — they were magnifiers, worshipers of Jesus

- the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified
- open, receptive, and hungry for the Holy Spirit — the Spirit moves powerfully and miraculously in their midst and glorifies Jesus, then the saints join in by magnifying Jesus
- often the church has become too familiar with Jesus, and therefore lost her intimacy with Jesus, characterized by cold, apathetic worship

- worshipping Jesus is a first work we must return to — if we are going to return to our first love

Acts 19:18-19 — they were transparent before each other

- many came confessing and telling their deeds publicly, burning books, forsaking their past
- it did not matter who was watching or what they thought, they were concerned about Jesus watching and what He thought
- a first work that the church needs to return to
 - being more concerned about Jesus' opinion of us, rather than other people's
 - evidenced by being transparent and repentant

The Church at Ephesus

started with revival fire

honest about their current level of experience with the Holy Spirit

teachable and responsive to further instruction

open and receptive to the Holy Spirit

magnified and worshiped Jesus

transparent and repentant before each other

wanted Jesus Himself

— within 35-40 years — they traded that First Love of Jesus for Dead Orthodoxy — went from Revival to Rebuke. Jesus was calling them back to Himself. How about us?

Discussion Questions

1. How can you tell whether a church that is sound in doctrine, active in service, and moral in conduct has its heart in the right place?
2. How can you tell if a church is pursuing a passionate love for Jesus?
3. Why is it easier to serve and to teach — rather than to sit and learn?
4. Why is it so hard for us to do what is necessary to be in His Presence — sit, adore, commune, receive?
5. What challenge does that place before me as an individual? What do I need to learn, overcome?
6. God gave us simple instructions on how we can return to our First Love with Him. Be honest about your relationship with Him now; what is your current spiritual condition?
7. Are you teachable and responsive to further instruction? Willing to lay aside personal bias to hear clear teaching?
8. Are you willing to be open and receptive to the working of the Holy Spirit in your life? Why or why not?
9. We, as individuals, who are returning to our "First Love" with Jesus, are powerful as we gather together to worship Him. How can church congregations that have cold, apathetic worship be revived?
10. What can we as individuals, and as a church, do to keep ourselves from going into a spiritual decline — like the church at Ephesus did?