

HAVE YOU LEFT YOUR FIRST LOVE?

by Gary T. Panell

The Loveless Church

"To the 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: 'I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. [Notice they had not lost their first love, but left their first love.] 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.'" (Revelation 2:1-5)

Background to the Book of Revelation and the letter to the Ephesus Church.

I am giving this message because I need it myself!

First Love "The church at Ephesus was off to a good start. And they were doing a lot of good things. But Jesus had one complaint against them. They had left their first love.

"God wants everything we do to be motivated by our love for Him. The problem in Ephesus was that, although they still had the works, labor, and patience of the past, their motivation had changed. They were no longer motivated by love. Other motivations had crept in.

"Jesus called them to remember and repent. Leave the legal relationship and return to the love relationship." (Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel)

What it was like when I first fell in love with my spouse? When I got back from Vietnam as a soldier I wanted so much to marry Marlene, but she seemed somehow withdraw from me, and I could not for the life of me understand why. So I asked her, she shocked me when she told me why. She explained, you have told me all the "practical reasons" why we should get married, but you haven't told me that you love me." I was so stunned, I was sure I had said it in letters, and other times.

The problem was I had not made it obvious, even though I felt tremendous love for Marlene in my heart; I had really not put those feelings into words. So that night I went home, through many tears, and thought about what she had said, she was right; I had mainly talked about the "practical reasons" for getting married. Then an idea came to me, I went and got some typing paper and some rocks. With these I formed a huge sign on her front yard, which read, "Marlene I LUV U!" Needless to say, she was really quite impressed, and as you guessed, it worked.

Remember that saying, "Keep it simple, stupid!" Show her you love her, but also say it, and say it often, until you convince her you really mean it!!!

What it was like when [I first got saved](#)? There is a famous poem called *The Touch of the Master's Hand* :

'Twas battered and scarred,
and the auctioneer
Thought it scarcely
worth his while
To waste much time on the old violin,
But held it up with a smile.
“What am I bid, good folks?” he cried.
“Who'll start the bidding for me?
A dollar, a dollar — now two, only two —
Two dollars, and who'll make it three?”

“Three dollars once, three dollars twice,
Going for three”

• but no!

From the room far back a gray-haired man
Came forward and picked up the bow;
Then wiping the dust from the old violin,
And tightening up all the strings,
He played a melody pure and sweet,
As sweet as an angel sings.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer,
With a voice that was quiet and low,
Said: “What am I bid for the old violin?”
And he held it up with the bow.
“A thousand dollars — and who'll make it two?
Two thousand dollars — and who'll make it three?”

Three thousand once and three thousand twice —
And going and gone!” said he.
The people cheered, but some of them cried,
“We do not quite understand.
What changed its worth?” The man replied:
THE TOUCH OF THE MASTER'S HAND

And many a man with life out of tune,
And battered and torn with sin,

Is auctioned cheap to a thoughtless crowd,
Much like the old violin.

A "mess of pottage," a glass of wine,
A game — and he travels on,
He's going — and almost gone!

But the Master comes, and the foolish crowd
Never can quite understand
The worth of a soul and the change that's wrought
By the touch of the Master's hand.

• Myra Brooks Welch

What was like when the church at Ephesus was started?

Paul at Ephesus

And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism."

Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Come, Holy Spirit "Now here in Acts, when Paul said to the Ephesians, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit since you believed?' (or 'when you believed?'), Paul was acknowledging that [you can believe and yet be filled with the Holy spirit at a later time](#). Paul probably asked the question because he observed a lack of fervency, a lack of love, a lack of passion or fire.

"There were and are many Christians lacking the real dynamic of the Spirit in their lives. They are sort of ho-hum Christians. There is no real fire. 'Yes, I'm a Christian. I believe in Jesus' but it doesn't go beyond that. There is no real enthusiasm for the things of the Lord. And perhaps Paul observed a spiritual deadness. So he asked, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit,' because the Holy Spirit is dynamic! He is power! He makes us alive to the things of God! He brings in us a fire and enthusiasm! He brings joy! So 'did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?'"

[What was it like when you were baptized in water? For me it was this way. If you have not been baptized you need to be.] And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Now the men were about twelve in all.

[What was it like when you were first Baptized or filled with the Holy Spirit? For me it was like this...This is not to say it is the same for everyone that way, but it is important that we are baptized or have an initial filling of the Holy Spirit. So if you have not made this step of faith I would challenge you to do so.]

And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. (Acts 19: 1-10)

[WITNESSES TO HIM](#) Acts 1:8 “Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power to live in such a way that you will become a reflection of Him. That's what being a witness is.

“It is interesting that in Antioch the people began to call Jesus' followers ‘Christians' because they were like Christ. The term ‘Christians' was not one His followers took upon themselves. It was a term given to them by the media of that day because they were so Christ like. It was sort of a derisive term, like when they used to call us ‘Jesus freaks' because we were so crazy about Jesus!

“God's desire is that our lives reflect Jesus. Peter said we should follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21), but we can't do that by our own power. We cannot forgive. We cannot love. We cannot be kind and considerate like Jesus. But by the power of the Holy Spirit, we can be transformed into His image and be witnesses to Him.” (Chuck Smith)

Miracles Glorify Christ

“Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them. Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so.

“And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds.

“Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned *them* in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and *it* totaled fifty thousand *pieces* of silver. So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.” (Acts 19: 11-20)

What was it like in our country when we first started?

Answer: The best way I can answer that question is with the words of this song, [America Again by Carman](#). (This takes you to YouTube. Type America Again by Carman in the search box, and you can watch and listen to this video.)

George Washington, Thomas Jefferson
Samuel Adams, First Chief Justice John Jay
Names synonymous with the spirit of our country
Founding fathers of the U.S.A.

Over 200 years ago they shook off the chains of tyranny from Great Britain By divine call
Citing 27 biblical violations they wrote the Declaration of Independence
With liberty and justice for all

But something happened since Jefferson called the Bible the cornerstone
For American liberty then put it in our schools as a light
Or since "Give me liberty or give me death", Patrick Henry said
Our country was founded on the Gospel of Jesus Christ

We eliminated God from the equation of American life
Thus eliminating the reason this nation first began
From beyond the grave I hear the voices of our founding fathers plead
You need God in America again

Of the 55 men who formed the Constitution
Fifty-two were active members of their church
Founding fathers like Noah Webster who wrote the first dictionary
Could literally quote the Bible chapter and verse

James Madison said, "We've staked our future on our ability to follow
The Ten Commandments with all our heart"
These men believed you couldn't even call yourself an American
If you subvert the Word of God

In his farewell address, Washington said, "You can't have
National morality apart from religious principle," and it's true
'Cause right now we have nearly 150,000 kids carrying guns
To these war zones we call public schools

In the '40's and '50's student problems were chewing gum and talking
In the '90's, rape and murder are the trend
The only way this nation can even hope to last this decade
Is to put God in America again

The only hope for America is Jesus
The only hope for America is him
If we repent of our ways stand firm and say

We need God in America again

Abe Lincoln said, "The philosophy of the schoolroom in one generation
Will be the philosophy of the government of the next"
So when you eliminate the Word of God from the classroom and politics
You eliminate the nation that Word protects
America is now number one in teen pregnancy and violent crime
Number one in illiteracy, drug use and divorce
Every day a new holocaust of 5,000 unborn die
While pornography flood our streets like open sewers

America's dead and dying hand is on the threshold of the Church
While the spirit of Sodom and Gomorrah vex us all
When it gets to the point where people would rather come out of the closet than clean it
It's the sign that the judgment of God is gonna fall

If there's ever been a time to rise up Church, it's now
And as the blood bought saints of the living God proclaim
That it's time to send the alarm from the Church house to The White House
And say, "We want God in America again"

I believe it's time America to stand up and proclaim
That one nation under God is our demand
And send this evil lifestyle back to Satan where it came from
And let the Word of God revive our dying land

For Jesus Christ is coming back again in all His glory
And every eye shall see Him on that day
That's why a new anointing of God's power's coming on us
To boldly tell the world you must be saved

Because astrology won't save you, your horoscope won't save you
The Bible says these things are all farce
If you're born again you don't need to look to the stars for your answers
'Cause you can look to the very One who made those stars

History tells us time and time again
To live like there's no God makes you a fool
If you want to see kids live right
Stop handing out condoms and start handing out the Word of God in schools

The only hope for America is Jesus
The only hope for America is him
If we repent of our ways stand firm and say
We need God in America again
(repeat)

We need God in America
God in America
God in America again

"Therefore you shall love the Lord your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always. (Deut. 11:1)

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord *is* one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up." (Deut. 6:4-7)

"And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul..." (Deut. 10:12)

"But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; Let those also who love Your name Be joyful in You." (Psalm 5:11)

"*And you shall* love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This *is* the first commandment." (Mark 12:30)

"Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." (John 14:15)

"For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height- to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." (Eph. 3:14-19)

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