

Summary

This sermon examines the letter to the church in Ephesus from Revelation 2:1-7, emphasizing that these ancient letters remain relevant for modern churches. The Ephesian church was commendable in many ways—they worked hard, persevered through persecution, tested false teachers, and remained doctrinally sound. However, Jesus confronted them with a serious issue: they had "forsaken the love you had at first." Despite their faithful service and correct theology, their hearts had grown cold toward God. The pastor draws parallels to marriage relationships and the parable of the prodigal son's older brother, explaining that God desires our hearts, not just our service. Without love, even the most dedicated religious activity becomes meaningless—like being "a resounding gong or clanging cymbal." The solution involves three steps: repenting (acknowledging the problem), remembering (recalling what first drew them to God), and taking action (doing things that foster relationship with God, practicing Sabbath, gratitude, and embracing grace). The sermon warns that God would rather extinguish a church's influence than allow it to continue operating without genuine love for Him.

Discussion Questions

1. **Personal Reflection:** Can you identify a time in your own spiritual journey when you may have been "doing all the right things" but felt like your love for God had grown cold? What contributed to that season?
2. **Church Health:** How can a church maintain doctrinal integrity and resist false teaching (like the Ephesians did well) while also nurturing genuine love and warmth in their relationship with God?
3. **Warning Signs:** What are some practical signs that might indicate a church or individual believer is losing their "first love"? How can these be recognized early?
4. **Marriage Analogy:** The sermon compares our relationship with God to marriage. How does this analogy help you understand what God desires from His people? What parallels do you see?
5. **Grace vs. Works:** Why do you think it's easier to fall into serving God out of duty rather than love? How does understanding grace help restore warmth to our relationship with God?
6. **Community Application:** The letter addresses the church as a community, not just individuals. How can a church community collectively "repent, remember, and take action" to restore their first love?
7. **Modern Relevance:** In what ways might contemporary churches be at risk of the same problem as the Ephesian church? What cultural pressures today might contribute to this issue?
8. **Practical Steps:** Which of the suggested remedies (practicing Sabbath, gratitude, lamenting, embracing grace) resonates most with you personally? How might you implement this?

