



# KEN LEGG MINISTRIES

QUALIFIED FOR EVERY BLESSING BECAUSE  
OF THE FINISHED WORK OF JESUS

## HAVE YOU LEFT YOUR FIRST LOVE?

Jesus said to the church at **Ephesus**, "I have this against you, that you have left your 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" (Rev.2:4&5).

What did He mean? A common interpretation is that He was saying that these Christians had backslidden. Their fire had gone out and if they didn't repent and get busy for Jesus again they were in danger of losing their salvation. Is that really His message to this church?

Well, first of all they definitely had not become slack or lazy. Jesus praised them for many things, e.g.

- Their works (i.e. the many different ways they served Him)
- Their labour (i.e. the hard work they put into those various deeds)
- Their patience in suffering in the face of persecution
- Their doctrinal stability (they tested self-proclaimed apostles and drove them out of the church when they found them to be false)
- They hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans (early church leaders say this was a practice started by a man called Nicholas who said it was OK for other men to marry his wife, thus setting off a practice of wife-sharing)

Jesus commended them for all these things. Obviously they weren't backslidden, apathetic or devoid of good works. So what was the problem?

### We love because He first loved us

Jesus rebuked the church for leaving their first love. The Greek word for 'first', is *protos*, meaning first in order, foremost in time, as in the beginning, etc. The same word is used in the next verse, Rev.2:5, concerning works. This is the key. When they left their first love they left their first works.

Notice, Jesus never said that they stopped doing works or serving Him. They didn't, as we have just seen. The problem is not that they stopped doing works, but that their motive for doing them had changed.

When we first got saved, what characterized our first works? Speaking for myself, I was so overwhelmed by God's love to me in Christ that I couldn't do enough for Him. Just the fact that He saved me was amazing; but then to think that He would actually include me in His purposes on earth just blew me away. My response was, "Where do I sign up? What can I do? Here am I, send me!!"



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I didn't have to be bribed into doing good works, nor was I manipulated by guilt or fear. My first works were the result of my first love. This is authentic Christianity. The apostle John says, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). That's it! That's the love of God in its most extravagant manifestation. That's why we must never lose the true meaning of the Cross. At Calvary, God's just judgment that was due to me because of my sins fell upon His own dear Son. Herein is love.

Then he says in the following verse, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11). Our love and our deeds are a response to His love for us.

### **First love Christianity vs mercenary Christianity**

The greater the revelation we get of the depth and breadth and height of God's love to us, the more we will want to live for His glory. Everything we do will be in response to this amazing love. We will experience first love Christianity. But if we miss this we will end up with mercenary Christianity. Everything we do for God will be an attempt to trade our works for His benefits and blessings.

And isn't that what has happened today? Here's an obvious example. In many churches, before the offering is received each week, the congregation is primed with a twenty-minute manipulative talk on 'giving'. "You will be blessed if you do and cursed if you don't!" "Sow a seed for your financial harvest!"

This shows us, 1) what the speaker really thinks about God. He doesn't want to bless you, but He can be bribed; 2) what the speaker thinks of the congregation. I know you don't want to give to the Lord's work, but consider the benefits of doing so!

And so when we operate like this, just like the church at Ephesus, we have left our first love. Our motive is no longer love, but fear, greed, unbelief, etc.

Remember, this church was full of good works, but they were no longer the first works, i.e. performed on the basis of first love. The message to this church was not:

- "Get busy or you'll lose your salvation." The lampstand is clearly not symbol of a Christian, but of a local church (see Rev.1:20). A church which has lost its first love becomes formal. It has a form of godliness, but lacks reality. The glorious light of His love has ceased to shine. Such a church is not a good witness to the world. Jesus can close such churches down if He chooses.
- "Get busy and I'll bless you." The fact is that He has already blessed us with every spiritual blessing. Everything God wants to do for you and in you and through you is already paid for. So then, why would you want to do anything for Jesus? Because of love. And that is pure Christianity!



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### **"I love my master; I will not go out free!"**

There is a beautiful illustration of this in the Bible. Under the Law, if an Israelite fell upon hard times and lost all his possessions and property he could, as a last resort, offer himself as a slave to a fellow-Jew. However, he could only serve for a maximum of six years. On the seventh year he was to be released. But in some cases, the servant had been so well treated and blessed by his master that he didn't want to leave him. He would say to himself, "I love my master; I will not go out free. Who else would treat me so kind? I want to serve him forever." If that was the case, the master would pierce his ear and he would be his bondservant forever. He had gladly bound himself, by his own free will, to live for his master for the rest of his life.

This is the difference between a servant and a bond-servant. A servant says, "I serve my master." A bond-servant says, "I love my master!" He chooses to serve because he loves. He loves, because he has been so loved by his master.

Paul, Timothy, James, Peter, and Jude all describe themselves as "bondservants of Christ". Some struggle with this. They say we are not servants but sons. That's true. Our status is that of sons of God. But we are sons who are proud to serve. We serve, not because we have to, nor in order to retain our place in our Father's house, nor even to receive some benefit or blessing. But purely because we love Him, who first loved us!

Don't lose your first love!

*Ken Legg*