

Revelation 2:1-7

To the Church at Ephesus

<p>[1] To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:</p>	<p>1. The Church:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ephesus 	<p>[Reminder: The word "church," as used here, may include people who <i>claim</i> to be Christian, but who really aren't.]</p>
<p>These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands:</p>	<p>2. About Christ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> His interest in his people, his authority over them, etc. He is with both the <i>church</i> ("lampstand") and its <i>messenger</i> ("star") - see Rev. 1:20. 	<p>Jesus cares for his people, and is willing to associate with them.</p> <p><i>Hold</i> - authority (to judge); protection <i>Among</i> - his presence (therefore he knows about them)</p>
<p>[2] I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance.</p> <p>I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false.</p> <p>[3] You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.</p>	<p>3. Their Strength</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WORKS: Willing to do lots of hard work, and to do it with persistence. DOCTRINE: Quick to examine what teachers claim; unwilling to put-up with those who are false. Willing to do all this <i>for Jesus' sake</i>, without considering it too burdensome of a task. Only one thing was missing... (See below.) 	<p>They have their focus on many <i>good</i> things.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They paid careful attention to Paul's warnings, in his farewell address to them - Acts 20:18-35. <p>Works and doctrine (actions and teachings) are both very important, but <i>all</i> must be done within the context of love. (See 1 Corinthians 13.)</p> <p>A willingness to persevere and endure is a common theme throughout the book of Revelation.</p>
<p>[4] Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.</p>	<p>4. Their Weakness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A lack of love. It's not merely "absent"; it's been "forsaken." 	<p>They have taken their focus off <i>the most important</i> thing - love.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Love for God Love for neighbor <p>These are the two greatest obligations we have.</p>

<p>[5] Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.</p> <p>If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.</p> <p>[6] But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.</p>	<p>5. Their Duty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What they must do: - Reflect on what has happened to them. - Change their ways - go back to the way they were. • If they don't... they will lose their place in Jesus' presence. (See the note, below.)* • There is still hope. They still hate what God hates. (A note of encouragement.) 	<p>Jesus doesn't tell them to <i>stop</i> having a concern for works and doctrine (v. 2-3), but to have love as their foundation and context - and as a part of <i>all</i> that they do.</p> <p>[This is a love characterized by commitment and loyalty, and by a desire to see honor given to God and good occurring to others. It is <i>not</i> a love of mere friendship or emotion.]</p> <p>There is still hope - they haven't begun to love <i>sinful</i> practices. Their actions are still <i>compatible</i> with love (instead of being <i>contradictory</i> to it).</p>
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*NOTE (from verse 5): Jesus is not suggesting that they will *lose* their salvation, if they are genuinely saved. People who belong to God (who have a changed heart) *will* take heed to Jesus' warning, and *will* repent. Those who don't (whose professions of faith are merely "skin deep") *won't* do these things. Early church records suggest that the people of this church *did* repent - though in a later century, things may have changed for the worse.

<p>[7] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.</p> <p>To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.</p>	<p>6. A Promise to All</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is for <i>all</i> who qualify: for all who maintain (or regain) a focus on doing all things in love. • They will experience the eternal blessings of God's love. 	<p>Those whose lives are an expression of love will spend eternity with God, the source of that love.</p> <p>For those who repent (who regain this focus on love for Christ): all their deeds and activities will <i>not</i> be in vain - in contrast to those who <i>don't</i> repent (see v. 5).</p>
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Comment about v. 6: Throughout the book of Revelation, we find direct quotes and allusions to the Old Testament. This includes references to the Genesis account of creation and the original "paradise." What we lost, when sin entered the world, is gained through Christ.



***We need to love the truth,
but...
We need to love the truth-giver even more!***

Revelation 2:1-7 Supplementary Study Information

A Few Background Comments

The city of Ephesus was a seaport, built at the mouth of the Cayster River. Silt from the river tended to accumulate in the harbor. On a few occasions, this required the city to be moved closer to the mouth of the river. (Thus, the people well understood the idea of the lampstand being "removed" from its location - see verse 5.) Today, the uninhabited ruins of the city are located about 7 miles from the sea.

Paul spent 3 years at Ephesus (Acts 19; 20:31). After that, Timothy stayed there for a while, in order to oppose various false teachers (1 Timothy 1:3). Tychicus was sent there with a letter from Paul (2 Timothy 4:12 and Ephesians 6:21). According to church tradition, the apostle John spent the last years of his life there.

Verse 1

HOLDING THE STARS

John 10:28 - from another perspective, *all of us* (not just leaders or representatives) are held!

AMONG THE LAMPSTANDS

Perhaps also suggesting that he is guarding / protecting them.

An "interplay" of various words (mostly in v. 2-3)

This is based on the New Testament Greek words. Some of the English words used in various translations are given in underlined italics.

DEEDS

Jesus knows their deeds / activities / works - v. 2.

They need to return to the deeds / works / things they originally had been doing - deeds that were an expression of love - v. 5.

They hated the Nicolaitans' deeds / practices / works - v. 6.

WEARISOME TOIL / HARD WORK

Jesus knows their hard work / labor / toil - v. 2 [noun form].

They did a lot of things (for Jesus), with patience and endurance, and have not grown weary or tired (they did not consider their work to be too burdensome) - v. 3 [verb form].

PERSEVERANCE / PATIENCE

Jesus knows their perseverance / patience / endurance - v. 2.

Jesus knows they have persevered / endured, and that it was for him - v. 3.

[Note: If the word "endure" was used as the translation for this word, it wouldn't be used with the following word.]

TOLERATING / BEARING WITH (something)

They did not bear with / tolerate / endure false teachers/apostles - v. 2.

They did endure / bear up with a lot of hardships, for Jesus - v. 3.

Verse 2

God's people are to be a reflection of his character. As far as their actions were concerned, these people served God well! They were opposed to both theological and moral compromise. The problem is that they became so focused on *what* they were doing, that they began to get their eyes off *why* they were doing it, and *who* they were doing it for. It was becoming a *duty*, rather than an expression of *love*.

I KNOW

A clear understanding of everything about them. God has a sovereign knowledge of all things (not just about the church at Ephesus, but about all that exists).

DEEDS / WORK / PERSEVERANCE

They were quite diligent.

NOT TOLERATING / but TESTING the people's claims

Doctrinal purity - They examined the things that people said, comparing what *they* said to what the *Bible* says. (Compare to Acts 17:11.) In Acts 20:28-30, Paul warned them that false teachers would try to infiltrate their ranks. They did everything they could, to keep this from happening.

- Compare to 1 John 4:1. We are to "test the spirits," to find out if they are from God. There are many false spirits in the world.

Verse 3

PERSEVERE / ENDURE / NOT WEARY

(See comments before verse 2.)

MY NAME'S SAKE

Their motive for doing this. They did it for the sake of the one who was represented by that name.

Verse 4

I HAVE THIS AGAINST YOU

They were accountable for their actions (just as we are).

FORSAKE

They left it, neglected it, abandoned it, etc. - though perhaps unintentionally.

FIRST LOVE

Their original fervency and depth of love was now gone. The object of this love is not defined. Does it refer to love for *Christ*, or love for *people*? Probably both, since it is impossible to completely separate our attitude toward God from our attitude toward people.

Originally, love did not appear to be a problem - see Ephesians 1:15-16, which mentions love for people. But one generation later, things had changed. Their initial zeal had changed into a "cold orthodoxy." As a "church," they had begun as an "organism" (the body of Christ - Colossians 1:18, 24), but had ended up as an "organization."

Nothing (not even a "religious" duty) is to be given more love and attention than God; *nothing except God* is to be given more love than other people. This summarizes the two greatest obligations we have (Matthew 22:37-40).

Verse 5

REMEMBER

A return to their original focus - the one they've forgotten.

REPENT

A change in their attitude and actions.

DO

Living their life as an expression (and reflection) of love, not mere duty.

This "work of love" would then become the foundation for all other "works." See 1 Corinthians 13.

IF NOT... COME / REMOVE

Ignatius (an early church leader, about A.D. 115) commended them for their love, so it seems that they took heed to Jesus' rebuke. However, later the church declined, and finally, those who remained were deported by the Turks, in the 14th century. Today, there is no "lampstand" in Ephesus.

Verse 6

YOU HAVE THIS (to your credit)

Though love for God and neighbor had diminished, it hadn't yet been replaced with love for sin (a love for what God hates).

HATE

We must *never* love what God hates! Seven examples of what God hates can be found in Proverbs 6:16-19, although many other things are mentioned elsewhere.

A few more verses which mention things that God hates (read the context of these verses, to get a good understanding of why he hates them) - Isaiah 61:8; Jeremiah 44:4; Amos 5:21; Zech. 8:17; Malachi 2:16.

There is even a sense in which evil people are to be hated - Psalm 5:5. We want good to happen to them, and we will not choose to do evil to them. But we also will not "reward" them for their sins. And if we have authority over them, we will have to punish/discipline them, when they sin. Our ultimate desire, however, is for them to repent, so that they can receive the blessings of God.

NICOLAITANS

Scripture (and history) does not tell us the precise nature of this group. This is probably because we are to hate *any* practice that God hates.

Whatever the nature of this group, they were like a cancer that would kill, if not removed. They may have advocated some type of moral compromise - perhaps calling it "freedom." (Some of the other churches were plagued with sexual immorality.) They may have also incorporated idolatrous practices into their worship, or had a focus on pleasure and indulgence. (These sins often tend to go together.)

Verse 7

EAR / HEAR

Individual application; each person must respond. This promise is applicable not only to the Christians at Ephesus, but to all Christians everywhere - *any* genuine follower of God.

I WILL GRANT / PERMIT

Indicating Jesus' sovereignty. Nothing will be able to keep him from doing what he promises.

PARADISE

Described as located in the "third heaven" - 2 Corinthians 12:3-4.

Where Jesus went, after his death on the cross (as did the one thief) - Luke 23:42-43.

The "Tree of Life" is there - Revelation 2:7.

MORE ABOUT THE TREE OF LIFE

When Adam and Eve sinned, they were banned from eating from the Tree of Life. This was actually a gracious act of kindness, for had they eaten from it, salvation would have been impossible. (Jesus couldn't have *died* for our sins!) We would have been eternally trapped in sin, with all its consequences - pain, sickness, sorrow, alienation, etc. - forever increasing. We, who have died to our sins and have been raised to life in Christ, will one day be able to eat freely from this tree.

- Originally in the garden of Eden - Genesis 3:22.
- Described as in "Paradise" - Revelation 2:7.
- Ultimately described as being in the "New Jerusalem," which comes down from heaven - Revelation 21:2 and 22:2.

Those who *do* overcome, who have the love of God in them (a love that overflows from them, and expresses itself back to God and to other people): They will share in an eternal, abundant life, with the God who loves them - who is also their source of their life.

Those who *don't* overcome, who don't have (or regain) the love of God in their lives: They may have lives filled with works... but it will all be in vain. Since they did not have this love in their lives, they will not spend eternity with the source of that love, and will not get to enjoy the blessings (or "fruits") of that love - which includes the tree of life.