

THE CHURCH THAT FORGOT TO LOVE

The Revelation 2:1-7

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Introduction:

I counted all my dollars while God counted crosses;
I counted gains while he counted losses;
I counted my worth by the things gained in store,
But he sized me up by the scars that I bore.
I coveted honors and sought for degrees;
He wept as He counted the hours on my knees.

I never knew till one day by a grave
How vain are the things that we spend life to save.
I did not know till a friend went above
That richest is he who is rich in God's love.

WE MUST HAVE A REVIVAL OF LOVE. HOW? By considering:

I. THE POSITION OF THE CHURCH (1)

A. Established in Her Place. A local church--see Philippians 1:1

B. Secure in His Hand

C. Judged by Her Head. Note description in 1:12-18

II. THE PROFICIENCY OF THE CHURCH (2)

A. Active in Good Works

B. Arduous in Labor

C. Abounding in Patience

III. THE PROBLEM IN THE CHURCH (3)

Title: Love in a Plastic Heart

"Does a(n artificial) heart have love in it?" This question was sent by seven-year-old Linda Griggs of Pittsburgh to the famed heart surgeon, Dr. Michael DeBakey of Houston, Texas.

Love is:

*Slow to suspect -- quick to trust.
Slow to condemn -- quick to justify.
Slow to offend -- quick to defend.
Slow to reprimand -- quick to forbear.
Slow to belittle -- quick to appreciate.
Slow to demand -- quick to give.
Slow to provoke -- quick to conciliate.
Slow to hinder -- quick to help.
Slow to resent -- quick to forgive.*

In the days of the American Revolutionary War there lived at Ephrata, Pennsylvania, a Baptist pastor by the name of Peter Miller who enjoyed the friendship of General Washington. There also dwelt in that town one Michael Wittman, an evil-minded man who did all in his power to abuse and oppose this pastor. One day Michael Wittman was involved in treason and was arrested and sentenced to death. The old preacher started out on foot and walked the whole seventy miles to Philadelphia to plead for this man's life. He was admitted into Washington's presence and at once begged for the life of the traitor. Washington said, "No, Peter, I cannot grant you the life of your friend." The preacher exclaimed, "My friend, he is the bitterest enemy I have." Washington cried, "What? You've walked seventy miles to save the life of an enemy? That puts the matter in a different light. I will grant the pardon." And he did. And Peter Miller took Michael Wittman from the very shadow of death back to his own home in Ephrata -- no longer as an enemy, but as a friend.

The lack of love is:

A. Detectable by God

B. Displeasing to God

Love: Fulfills the Law (Matthew 22:37,39; Galatians 5:14)

Sets us Apart (Luke 6:32,25)

Establishes a Good Testimony (John 13:35)

Verified by Obedience (John 14:21-24)

Mark of a "Last Days" Attitude (Matthew 24:12)

Greatest of All Attributes (I Corinthians 13:13)

Do you really love the Lord?

Lois K. Blanchard pictures Christ as still walking the streets today. She asks these pointed questions:

*"If Jesus came to your own home to spend a day or two --
If He came unexpectedly, I wonder what you'd do?
I know you'd give your nicest room to such an honored Guest,
and all the food you'd serve to Him would be the very best.
And you would keep assuring Him you're glad to have Him there --
That serving Him in your own home is joy beyond compare;
but when you saw Him standing there, could you go to the door,
with arms outstretched to welcome Him your Heavenly Visitor?
Or would you have to change some things before you let Him in?
Or hide some magazines and put the Bible where they'd been?
Would family conversation be continued at its pace?
And would you find it hard each meal to say a table grace?
Would you be glad to have him meet your very closest friends?
Or would you hope they'd stay away until His visit ends?
Would you be glad to have Him stay forever, on and on?
Or would you sigh with great relief when He at last was gone?
It might cause some embarrassment the things that you would do,
if Jesus came to your own house to spend some time with you.*

C. Brings chastisement (Heb 12:6)

IV. THE PROSPECT FOR THE CHURCH (4-7)

A. Revival

1. Remember Where You Were (5a)

I had to write to tell you how much I love you and care for you. Yesterday, I saw you walking and laughing with your friends; I hoped that soon you'd want me to walk along with you, too. So, I painted you a sunset to close your day and whispered a cool breeze to refresh you. I waited -- you never called -- I just kept on loving you.

As I watched you fall asleep last night, I wanted to touch you. I spilled moonlight onto your face -- trickling down your cheeks as so many tears have. You didn't even think of Me; I wanted so much to comfort you.

The next day I exploded a brilliant sunrise into glorious morning for you. But you woke up late and rushed off to work -- you didn't even notice. My sky became cloudy and My tears were the rain.

I love you, oh, if you'd only listen. I really love you. I try to say it in the quiet of the green meadow and in the blue sky. The wind whispers My love throughout the treetops and spills it into the vibrant colors of all the flowers. I shout it to you in the thunder of the great waterfalls and compose love songs for birds to sing for you. I warm you with the clothing of My sunshine and perfume the air with nature's sweet scent. My love for you is deeper than any ocean and greater than any need in your heart. If you'd only realize how I care. I demonstrated it to you at Calvary.

My (Father) sends His love. I want you to meet Him -- He cares, too. Fathers are just that way. So please call on me soon (time is running out).

2. Return from Where You Are (5b)

*If all the sleeping folk will wake up,
If all the lukewarm folk will fire up,
If all the dishonest folk will confess up,
If all the disgruntled folk will cheer up,
If all the depressed folk will cheer up,
If all the estranged folk will make up,
If all the gossipers will shut up,
If all true soldiers will stand up,
If all the dry bones will shake up,
If all the church members will pray up...
Then we can have a revival!
-- R.G. Lee*

3. Resume that Which You've Quit (5c)

Robert Falconer tells the story of his witnessing among destitute people in a certain city and of reading them the story of the woman who wiped Jesus' feet with her tears. While he was reading he heard a loud sob and looked up at a young, thin girl whose face was disfigured by smallpox. After he spoke a few words of encouragement to her, she said, "Will He ever come again, the One who forgave the woman? I have heard that He will come again. Will it be soon?" Falconer replied. After sobbing again uncontrollably, she said, "Sir, can't He wait a little while? My

hair ain't long enough yet to wipe His feet."

B. Reward (7b). Note individuality of the promise.

C. Removal (5b)

1. It will be Prompt

2. It will be Permanent

Conclusion: The Pain of Love

A lady visiting the Holy Land came upon a sheepfold located high on a hilltop. Her attention was drawn to one poor sheep lying by the side of the road bleating in pain. Looking more closely, she discovered that its leg was injured. She asked the shepherd how it happened. "I had to break it myself," he answered sadly. "It was the only way I could keep that wayward creature from straying into unsafe places. From past experience I have found that a sheep will follow me once I have nursed it back to health. Because of the loving relationship that will be established as I care for her, in the future she will come instantly at my beck and call."

The woman replied thoughtfully, "Sometimes we poor human sheep also want our stubborn ways and as a result stray into dangerous paths until the Good Shepherd sends sorrow and pain to arrest us. Coming then into a sweeter and closer communion with our Savior, we at last are conditioned to hear His voice and follow His leading."