

"Leaving Your First Love"

Revelation 2:1-7

Harry Leafe

- 1A. Introduction (refer to the PowerPoint slides)
 - 1B. Ephesus was the leading city of the richest region of the Roman Empire. It had a population of some 250,000 people. Aristides spoke of Ephesus as the most prosperous commercial center of the time, controlling the financial affairs of western Asia Minor.
 - 2B. Ephesus is located at the mouth of the Cayster River, which connects to the Aegean Sea.
 - 3B. From the highpoint of the city you can look toward what used to be its harbor. Through the centuries it has become filled with silt (indicated by the arrow) so that the city is now located six miles inland.
 - 4B. The city had an advanced infrastructure: *water system* (note the clay pipes that are still in the ground but lie exposed, and the stacked clay sections of pipe that have been collected), *public restrooms* (sewage system), etc.
 - 5B. As we travel the main road from the upper city down to the seaport we observe:
 - 1C. Mosaic tile sidewalks (note the patterns of the tile)
 - 2C. There were temples for the worship of the Roman emperors [emperor worship] (like this one -- the little plate in the back wall when brought up close tells us that this temple was dedicated to the emperor Hadrian).
 - 3C. Here is another (the name of the emperor is not known).
 - 4C. And don't forget Artemis (also known as Diana), the Greek goddess whose temple (long since destroyed) was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The worship of Artemis involved the practice of magic (Satanic practices). There were many temples to other deities, most of which were fertility gods and goddesses, and the worship of which involved the use of both male and female temple prostitutes (which would later have its impact on the church in Ephesus).
 - 5C. This advanced culture boasted a vast library (seen here). The road continues in front of the library on toward the great theater (it sat 24,000 people); seen here from the inside; here looking back from the road leading to the harbor; and here looking from the theater toward the harbor.
 - 6B. Ephesus was first visited by Paul in mid September of A.D. 52 (Acts 18:19-21).
 - 7B. Paul's second visit and the establishment of the church - September 53 to May 1, 53 (Acts 19:1- 20:1).
 - 8B. Paul met with the elders of Ephesus on Miletus from April 30 to May 2, 57 (Acts 20:17-38, where they are warned about trouble ahead).
 - 9B. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus, about which he said, *"a wide door for effective*

service stands open for me [i.e., to proclaim and teach the gospel of Christ], *but there are many adversaries*" (16:9). He also mentioned that he had "*fought with wild beasts at Ephesus*" (15:32), speaking metaphorically – borrowing a phrase from Hellenistic moral philosophy's description of a wise man's struggle with hedonism [the ethical doctrine that pleasure, variously conceived of in terms of happiness of the individual or of society, is the principal good and the proper aim of action].

- 10B. The Letter to the Ephesians was written from Rome in autumn of 60 (they are commended for their *faith, hope and love*).
- 11B. Timothy and the Apostle John ministered there (it became his home base). In fact, the church fathers write that John brought Mary, our Lord's mother to Ephesus – and both are said to be buried there.
- 12B. By the end of the apostolic age, there were three "Christian" groups that co-existed in Ephesus:
 - 1C. the church founded by Paul
 - 2C. the Nicolaitans, a heretical cult made up of the followers of Nicolas of Antioch
 - 3C. a Jewish-Christian group lead by one John of Patmos.
- 2A. The Letter to the Church at Ephesus (2:1-7).
 - 1B. A word of salutation (2:1).
 - 1C. To the church through the pastor or teaching elder.
 - 2C. Jesus Christ is the Head of the church -- it is to take its instructions from Him.
 - 3C. The church is to reflect the glory of God in the world.
 - 4C. He "walks among" the churches. He knows all things. What we do and why we do it (see Heb. 4:12-13).
 - 2B. A word of commendation (2:2-3).
 - 1C. They knew about works (see Eph. 2:8-10).
 - 2C. Our good works issue from our relationship w/ Christ.
 - 3C. They were doctrinally straight.
 - 4C. They were an "active" church. And the indication is that they were doing things that were good and positive.
 - 5C. They had "staying power."
 - N.B. If Christ wrote you a letter today, would He say these kinds of things about you?

- 3B. A word of complaint (2:4).
"You have left your first love."
The term (Gr. *aphiēmi*) means to leave or depart from something. It can even mean divorce (see 1 Cor. 7:11). Figuratively it means to give up, abandon, neglect. It is a strong term!

It has to do with passionate love for the Lord Jesus Christ. Whereas our "works" should indicate our love for Christ (see John 14:23), they are not necessarily so. The problem is with heart attitude or heart motivation (e.g. Psm. 42:1-2a).

- 4B. A word of exhortation and warning (2:5).
- 1C. *"Remember from what high state you have fallen. . ."*
(Status is in view here, not physical position. Walking in the Spirit is the "high state" of the Christian life.)
- 2C. *"and repent!"*
- 3C. *"Do the deeds you did at the first; . . ."*
- 4C. *"if not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place -- that is, if you do not repent."*

N.B. This refers to the sphere and influence of your ministry.
Where are you today? Is Jesus Christ your first love? Have you moved away from Him? What do others see in your life?

- 5B. A word of praise (2:6).
- 1C. *"You hate what the Nicolaitans practice -- practices I also hate."*
- 2C. The Nicolaitans were a sect associated with Nicolas, one of the seven original deacons in the church at Jerusalem (see Acts 6:5) that apparently taught that Christians could engage in immoral behavior with impunity (see 2:15).

- 6B. A word of promise (2:7).
- 3C. *"The one who has an ear had better hear what the Spirit says to the churches."*
- 4C. *"To the one who conquers"* (traditionally, "who overcomes") = (see 1 Jn. 2:14; 5:1-5).
- 5C. *"I will permit him to eat from the tree of life"* = Prov. 3:18 (wisdom); 11:30 (fruit of righteousness).

The point seems to be that the believer who conquers – who is victorious (experientially) will experience a quality of life with the Savior that others will not experience.