

The night Jesus was arrested
was the hardest night of Peter's life...

Christ Calls Us to Our First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Do you love me?

Three times, Jesus asked Simon Peter... and Peter was hurt

This morning, we all stand under the searching gaze of Jesus Christ, whose eyes are like blazing fire, who searches hearts and minds... and by this text he asks us all that same question... DO YOU LOVE ME?

And it's not enough to say simply, "You know that I love you, Jesus!" We have to ask a deeper question... "Do I love Christ more now than I did a year ago? Is my love for Christ growing and developing, or is it stagnating or contracting... is it shrinking under the constant onslaught of the world, the flesh, and the devil?" And if my love for Christ is dying, what can I do to be revived to a healthy and growing love for Christ?

Beyond this may be simple diagnostics... how can I KNOW? By what measurement system can I evaluate my heart's love for Christ?

In this probing text, seven verses in Revelation 2, Christ will search us and probe us and ask us perhaps some painful questions... have we forsaken our first love?

I. Christ's Constant Vigilance over the Churches

A. Review: Revelation 1

1. The revelation of JESUS CHRIST... an unveiling of who Christ is, of his majestic glory and powerful person

Revelation 1:14-16 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. ¹⁵ His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. ¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

2. Christ is revealed in resurrection glory, walking through seven golden lampstands, holding in his right hand seven stars

Revelation 1:20 The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

3. A prophetic vision of Christ, our Lord, our Savior, our Great High Priest, in his continually vigilant, active ministry to every local church in the world

B. The Historical Context

1. Revelation 2-3: Christ's letters to the seven churches in the province of Asia... modern-day Turkey
 - a. Real churches, local churches, each with their challenges and issues
 - b. BUT ALSO timeless lessons for ALL churches in ALL eras of church history... each of the seven letters ends with the same words

Revelation 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

- c. So we need to study these seven letters and take them to heart carefully
 - d. The composite picture of the strengths and weaknesses of each of these churches, and especially of what Christ thinks about these churches is VITAL for us at this local church... here at First Baptist, Durham, North Carolina, in the second decade of the 21st century
2. Timeless lessons come from the unchanging nature of Christ, and of his commands for us in this world

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

3. Timeless lessons come also from the unchanging nature of his commands for us:

Matthew 28: Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to OBEY everything I have commanded you

The internal journey of HOLINESS in obedience to his commands

The external journey of EVANGELISM in winning lost people around the world

These two tasks stood in front of the church in the first century... and they are still in front of us today

4. Timeless lessons also come from the unchanging nature of Satan's evil attacks on the church... in every generation, the attacks are the same
 - a. Satan attacks the church PHYSICALLY through vicious persecuting humans, especially evil governments like Caesar and the Romans
 - b. Satan attacks the church MENTALLY, luring it toward false understandings, false thinking, false religions, false philosophies
 - c. Satan attacks the church MORALLY, luring it toward sin and wickedness, immorality and debased living

So... persecution, false doctrine, and evil lusts... these are the three timeless, unchanging attacks of the devil. Same in our day!

Around the world, some of our brothers and sisters in Christ are being viciously pounded by physical attacks... verbal attacks and insults, economic attacks such as unemployment or people refusing to sell to them, beatings, imprisonments, even torture and death.

Beyond that, Satan is constantly pumping out false doctrines by means of worldly philosophies, cults, false religions, and scientific theories... this is going on in every place in the world

And also we see the constant allure of the world by appeal to our lusts for sinful pleasures, seeking to draw the church into compromise and immorality

The Book of Revelation is a timeless call to Christians in every generation to live openly and courageously for Jesus Christ, bowing the knee to Christ as Lord, putting sin to death by the Spirit, testifying to the lost that Jesus is Savior, and standing courageously in the fires of persecution with great perseverance

5. The Apostle John was in exile in Patmos

- a. The Roman Empire was heading toward the zenith of its power
- b. The Emperor Nero had begun persecutions of Christians, but they were sporadic and limited to his immediate locality in Rome
- c. His successor, Domitian, was extending this persecution empire-wide... the battle between Caesar and Christ was now joined in earnest... both are jealous Kings who want our full allegiance... we cannot serve both Christ and the world system
- d. The whole book of Revelation is best seen in the light of that eternal struggle... and these letters to the seven churches makes these very same issues plain...
- e. All seven of these letters are relevant for us... beginning with this message to the church at Ephesus

C. Christ's Constant Vigilance is Absolutely Essential

1. The image of Jesus Christ walking carefully and thoughtfully in the midst of the seven golden lampstands is a powerful one
2. So also the image of him holding in his right hand the seven stars, represents the seven pastors, or key messengers of these local churches
3. The ONE, SINGLE, UNIVERSAL CHURCH of Christ will be portrayed at the end of this book as a Holy City, the New Jerusalem... also as the Bride of Christ
4. But the importance of individual local churches cannot be overstated... CHURCHES feed the CHURCH... the health and

growth and vigor of the universal church is tied in every generation to the strength of the local churches around the world

5. Local churches get stronger or weaker depending on how they respond to the three assaults of the devil—persecution, false doctrine, sin
6. Beyond this, local churches can be REMOVED as an act of judgment by Christ, as we will see today
7. Christ MINISTERS constantly to these LAMPSTANDS, making the fire burn higher and hotter, or allowing it to flicker and be extinguished as he sees fit
8. Individual Christians can never lose their salvation, but visible assemblies of Christians in a specific city meeting under a specific name in a specific building can die... Christ can and actually regularly DOES remove lampstands who do not respond properly to these three Satanic assaults
9. I am jealous for FBC, that we would burn brighter and higher for Christ here in Durham

D. We Begin with the Letter to the Church at Ephesus...

II. Christ's Commendation: Labor and Right Doctrine

A. Ephesus

1. The city: its prominence and spiritual corruption
 - a. Ephesus was the most important city in Asia Minor, and was effectively the Roman capital of Asia Minor, since the governor resided there
 - b. Population in NT times: between a quarter and half a million people
 - c. Famous throughout the world for the Temple of Diana (Artemis), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world; people came from all over the world to see it and to take part in the unspeakably wicked pagan worship there

John MacArthur: “The temple was attended by numerous priests, eunuchs, and slaves. Thousands of priestesses, who were little more than ritual prostitutes, played a major role in the worship of Artemis. The temple grounds were a chaotic cacophony of priests, prostitutes, bankers, criminals, musicians, dancers, and frenzied hysterical worshipers. The philosopher Heraclitus was called the weeping philosopher because he declared that no one could live in Ephesus and not weep over its immorality.”

2. The history of the gospel in Ephesus

Perhaps no Gentile city in the time of the New Testament had a richer heritage and more powerful ministry than did Ephesus

- a. Priscilla and Aquila, Jews expelled from Rome during an earlier persecution, came to Ephesus and began witnessing there
- b. They were soon joined by a powerful preacher and debater named Apollos... these three people laid the groundwork for the comprehensive ministry that Paul would begin in Ephesus
- c. Paul and Ephesus
 - i) Paul had been thwarted in an earlier attempt to get to Ephesus on his second missionary journey; he was “kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the gospel in the province of Asia” (Acts 16:6)
 - ii) However, on his return journey, Paul visited Ephesus briefly and saw how incredibly strategic the city would be
 - iii) He went right back there at the start of his third missionary journey and spent at least two and a half years there, carefully preaching, teaching, and evangelizing
 - iv) It is likely that the other six churches in Revelation were planted out of Ephesus, according to Acts 19:9-10
 - v) Paul did astonishing miracles there, confirming the truth of the gospel

vi) The power of Satan was openly challenged and broken there...

A Jewish family of exorcists tried to imitate Paul's miracles by driving out a demon... the demon answered "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but WHO ARE YOU?" and the demon-possessed man beat up these seven brothers, stripping them naked and driving them out into the street

Also many converts to Christ burned their occultist scrolls, totaling 50,000 days of workers wages... amazing effect of the gospel ministry

3. Paul's bold ministry in Ephesus led to so many people being converted that the silversmiths who made those replica silver shrines organized a major demonstration leading to a riot in which they shouted "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians" for over two hours
4. Paul's farewell to the Ephesian elders: Acts 20... one of the great statements of pastoral ministry ever... gives us a sense of the power of Paul's commitment to plant that church there
5. After Paul left Ephesus, never to return, he sent his protégé Timothy to shepherd that church; Paul wrote the famous letter to the Ephesian church, and 1 and 2 Timothy were written in light of Timothy's ministry in Ephesus
6. As the years went on, the church in Ephesus continued to be the most influential church in that region of the world; according to ancient tradition, the Apostle John himself replaced Timothy towards the end of the first century, and perhaps addressed 1 John to them
7. Now, John is in exile for his ministry to the truth of Christ... and Christ uses John as a mouthpiece for his first of these seven letters

B. Christ's Self-Identification

Revelation 2:1 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands..."

1. To the “angel of the church in Ephesus...”: angel = messenger; the seven stars represent the seven messengers to these churches
 - a. It could be literally angels... but why would Christ tell John to write a physical letter to an angel from heaven?
 - b. More likely, this is the pastor of that local church
2. Christ identifies himself based on the vision John has already given
 - a. As we’ve said, these symbols represent Christ’s OWNERSHIP of and PROTECTION of the local churches... both the pastors and the churches are in his gaze and in his hand
 - b. Christ is actively addressing them: THESE ARE THE WORDS OF...

C. Christ’s Commendation of the Church at Ephesus

Revelation 2:2-3 I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. 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. ³ You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

1. Christ always begins the same way: “I know...”: usually, he says “I know your DEEDS...”
 - a. He does not say “I am learning” or “I am coming to know”... rather, I KNOW... I know you completely, totally, and perfectly
 - b. The deeds represent the basis of his judgment of them; but his knowledge also goes to their HEARTS as we shall see
2. Three virtues worthy of Christ’s commendation
 - a. Their DEEDS
 - b. Their ENDURANCE
 - c. Their COMMITMENT TO RIGHT DOCTRINE

3. #1: Their deeds

- a. The Greek word implies LABOR, even to the point of exhaustion
- b. They were a beehive of activity... “faith without works is dead”... but theirs was a vigorous Christian lifestyle
- c. We don’t know what deeds Christ is commending here, but maybe hospitality for strangers; caring for the sick, widows, needy; witnessing to lost people in that wicked culture; teaching disciples true doctrine; raising their families in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; women making clothes and cooking food for those who needed it in the church

4. #2: Their ENDURANCE

- a. As we saw in Paul’s day, there was a lot of opposition to Christianity there
- b. Perhaps some of the craftsmen like Demetrius had organized economic sanctions against Christians, making it difficult to buy or sell
- c. Perhaps there were some incidents of physical persecution
- d. But this church ENDURED, they persevered and did not grow weary

5. #3: Their orthodox doctrine

- a. This was the church that received the Book of Ephesians... one of the deepest doctrinal treatises in the New Testament
- b. They had some excellent elders trained in doctrine by Paul
- c. Paul had warned them about the coming of false doctrine... even from within their number:

Acts 20

Acts 20:29-31 I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰ Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. ³¹ So be on your guard!

- d. They were openly and clearly teaching right doctrine, and they had a powerful level of discernment to expose false apostles... they were able to TEST THEM and find them FALSE
- e. They prayed, they searched the scriptures, they got the doctrine RIGHT
- f. Furthermore, they opposed the teaching of the Nicolaitans... they HATED the libertine false teachers that led people into idolatry and sexual immorality

The church at Ephesus was HARD WORKING, persevering in the face of opposition and hardship, and doctrinally pure

SO... what was wrong??

III. Christ's Judgment: You Have Forsaken Your First Love

Revelation 2:4 *Yet I hold this against you: you have forsaken your first love.*

A. ~~They had~~ WILLFULLY and probably GRADUALLY forsaken their first love

The love they had at first

1. What does this mean?
2. Christianity can be tested by LOVE
 - a. True Christianity results in heart-felt obedience to the two great commandments: ***Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, strength; love your neighbor as yourself***
 - b. Where there is no love, there is no life
3. Little by little, though willful choices they had made, had allowed their hearts to grow hard and cold and loveless
4. Probably it was love for the world that crowded it out... not immorality, or else Christ would have called them on that... but either they had become grimly ascetic, coldly cranking out their works with no heart or joy, or they had started to fill their love needs with amoral worldly pleasures... food, possessions, friendships, scenery, hobbies, etc.

Could refer to love for each other... but

B. First and Foremost: Love for Christ

1. The Old Testament has a strong image of Israel as God's beloved BRIDE

Jeremiah 2:2-3 "I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown. ³ Israel was holy to the LORD, the firstfruits of his harvest

2. Many of the prophets picked up on this image of God's love relationship with his bride, Israel, and her wandering ways, going after other lovers
3. In the New Testament, the spiritual image is fulfilled in the church, the "Bride of Christ"
4. Christ desires his Bride to delight in him, to love him with all her heart, soul, mind and strength
5. BUT over the years, their original ardor for Christ had cooled... their hearts had grown cold and distant
6. And this was not merely an accident; for Jesus said they had FORSAKEN their first love... they had willfully given it up

C. All the Work and Doctrine Become Drudgery Without Love for Christ

1. In the Old Testament, Jacob had to work for seven years for his taskmaster father-in-law, Laban... but look at his attitude about all that hard work:

Genesis 29:20 So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.

2. But if our love for Christ has grown cold, the Christian life starts to feel like a BURDEN

Matthew 15:8-9 "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. ⁹ They worship me in vain

3. Christ wants to do this for his bride:

Hosea 2 →

Hosea 2:14-16 "Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and Speak tenderly to her... There she will sing as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt. ¹⁶ "In that day," declares the LORD, "you will call me 'my husband'"

Hosea 2:19-20 I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. ²⁰ I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD.

D. Insights from Church History

1. Augustine's *Confessions*

"You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and the heart of man is restless until it finds its rest in you."

We were
created to
love
God

2. Jonathan Edwards's "Treatise on Religious Affections"

a. True religion very much consists in the AFFECTIONS of the heart

Affections = heart's ability to be drawn to, or inclined to something

b. Like a magnetic attraction... an inner delight... a warmth and drawing and passion and fire

Think of all the ways we use the word "love"... like "I love a warm spring day... or I love hiking and seeing mountain scenery... or I love chocolate ice cream... or I love the Durham Bulls... or I love my wife... or I love the Lord

Same word for all these means something common: HEART IS ATTRACTED

3. Without this, there is no true relationship with Christ!

4. Love is the point of his entire saving work in us!!

1 Corinthians 13:13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love

The most
powerful
attraction
should
be
God...
Christ

Ephesians had forgotten
their FIRST LOVE

IV. Christ's Command: Remember, Repent, Resume

Christ WILL NOT leave any local church wandering aimlessly in a desert of lovelessness, churning out works and right doctrine from a cold heart. That is appalling to him. So he presses in and gives this powerful heart therapy, like the skillful physician of the soul that he is

A three-fold therapy: remember, repent, resume

Revelation 2:5 Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.

A. Remember the height (or place) from which you have fallen

1. The falling image goes with the idea of BACKSLIDING

Growth in intimacy with Christ is portrayed like a climb up a mountain, with better and better views of the incredible love of Christ for us, displayed in the cross and in his amazing affection for us through the Holy Spirit

2. The more we obey his word, the more he discloses his love to us

John 14:21 Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."

3. This love is INFINITE in its dimensions... as we saw in Ephesians

Ephesians 3:17-19 I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,¹⁸ may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

4. The Ephesian Christians had reached great heights in their love relationship with Christ... now, they have willfully forsaken that height and have slid back down to coldness and spiritual mediocrity... their hearts are cold and distant from Christ

5. The beginning is to REMEMBER how it used to be at first... when you FIRST loved Christ, when you FIRST felt his love pierce through you, and your heart thrilled to see for the first time the LIGHT OF THE GLORY OF GOD in the face of Christ
6. When you first surveyed the wondrous cross on which the prince of glory died
7. When you first realized like the Prodigal Son that all your sins have been forgiven and that your Father loves you like he loves his only begotten Son, and that nothing can snatch you out of his hands and that you are going to heaven when you die
8. When you first thrilled to the beauty of it all, the glory of it... the radiant truth and security of God's immeasurable love for you in Christ
9. That is the HEIGHT from which you have fallen... remember!!!

B. Repent

1. Feel the pain of your fall... cry out against yourself... turn in your mind and become alarmed and awakened and zealous
2. The coldness of your affections for Christ is a GREAT SIN... it is not a small thing to be BORED with Christ or DISTANT from Christ or ALOOF or COLD or UNINTERESTED
3. Prod yourself by God's Word... provoke your heart and charge yourself with sin
4. Turn from your present course... do a U-Turn and think differently than you have been thinking
5. Renew your mind by God's Word to see your present spiritual state the way Christ does
6. REPENT! This is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY... it is YOUR FAULT that you have forsaken your first love

C. Resume: DO THE THINGS YOU DID AT FIRST!!

1. There is no waiting! This matter is most urgent!

2. Since the issue is one of a LOVE relationship, there were certain things that you did back at the start of your relationship with Christ
3. Perhaps you went for long walks in the woods and prayed with tears coming down your face out of gratitude for Christ's atoning death
4. Perhaps you spent an entire evening in eager study of God's word, scouring it to find more and more discoveries of how much God has done for you in Christ, how great is his love for you
5. Perhaps you sang psalms, hymns, spiritual songs alone to him... or gathered with others to have an evening of praise and worship

I remember myself buying my first personal hymnal about four years into my Christian life and with delight sitting on a picnic bench at a park near Lexington, MA, and sang as many of those hymns as I knew... which was a lot by then... I don't have a great voice, but I can carry the tune. And I didn't care who heard me, though that's not why I did it.

I also remember how I used to go out every Sunday afternoon after church when I was single and spend the day in some pretty place with a Spurgeon sermon or some other excellent Christian literature and read and pray and weep for joy and just delight in Christ

Those were things I used to do

What do YOU do when you were first converted? When it was all brand new? What ways did you serve him extravagantly... like Mary, who poured that expensive perfume, that NARD, all over Jesus in a lavish display of love worth over a years' wages. She poured it out because she loved him so much

What did you do to pour out your love for Christ?

6. RESUME those actions again! Perhaps you had a prayer journal... or you liked to do some sacrificial ministry to the poor in which you especially felt close to Christ

7. Maybe you loved to read missionary biographies... or go for a walk with Christian friends and share out of the heart of joy you had

D. Christless Pleasure Has Such a Deadening Effect on the Soul

Ecclesiastes 1:8 All things are wearisome, more than one can say.

1. We think the world will bring us happiness, and all it does is ADDICT us to questionable habits that are less and less satisfying to us
2. Little by little, we lose our taste for anything but that habit, and that doesn't make us happy anymore either
3. This deadening is the inevitable effect of a seeking of earthly pleasures APART from Christ
4. Again, I am not talking about SIN, because that is a different category in these seven churches
5. But here, it's just the DEADNESS of a Christless existence... even if you're busy doing good things
6. God calls on us to FIGHT for our joy in Christ... to resume old patterns of delight that we have in recent times given up
7. It is NOT OKAY to be cold, listless, bored in our walk with Christ, to have hearts far from him, to forsake our first love

E. Remember... Repent... Resume!!! BUT... what if we DON'T???

V. Christ's Warning: I Will Remove Your Lampstand

Revelation 2:5 If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

A. This is a Grave Threat!

1. Christ will not have a loveless orthodoxy... or a loveless religious machine cranking out good works with a listless detached spirit
2. He doesn't need anything from us... he doesn't need our local church...

3. So, if a church that has forsaken its first love will not repent, Christ threatens to remove the lampstand from its place

4. Alexander Strauch: ***LOVE OR DIE!!!***

B. Understand: This is NOT Speaking of Individual Christians Losing their Salvation

1. Rather of the presence of that specific local church in that specific place

2. Christ would rather have NO CHURCH AT ALL in Ephesus than a loveless church, even if the doctrine and works are biblical

3. All local churches are temporary; If a local church ceases to live for the glory of God in right doctrine, right actions and right heart, he will remove it

4. By the 11th century, the Muslims had conquered Turkey, obliterating any vestige of Christianity there

5. By the Middle Ages, Archbishop Trent wrote of a “Christian traveler visiting the village of Ephesus found only three Christians there, and these had sunken in such ignorance and apathy that they scarcely had heard the names of Paul or John.”

C. This is a Serious Warning to FBC and Churches Around the World

Churches even in this very area have died before our very eyes... they have buildings, and a few people meeting there, but no passion, no zeal for Christ

VI. Christ’s Promises: The Tree of Life

Revelation 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

A. Each of these letters to the churches ends with sweet promises... but always to the CONQUERORS... “To him who overcomes...”

1. There are powerful adversaries we must conquer in order to finish this Christian race and be maximally fruitful for the glory of God

2. They had to REMEMBER, REPENT, and RESUME

3. If they did, Christ would lavish rewards on them

B. He Begins with a Call to HEAR

He who has an ear...

1. The Spirit speaks through the scripture!! The Spirit delivers Christ's words to the churches

2. By faith, we listen and live

C. The Rewards of Hearing and Conquering

1. The **right to eat from the tree of life in the paradise of God**

2. This tree of life was originally in the Garden of Eden; when Adam sinned, God put a warrior angel with a flaming sword to guard the way to the tree

3. But now, in Christ, that is the very thing promised here!

4. To eat from the "tree of life" means to live forever!

Revelation 22:2 On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

5. Jesus will HEAL US from all death, and we will live with him in perfect health forever and ever

6. Also, the right to eat from the tree of life = the right to enter the Holy City, the New Jerusalem

Revelation 22:14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

VII. Applications

A. Come to Christ

1. These seven letters are love letters written from Christ to his churches

2. Here he calls on his people to LOVE him with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength
3. But this love is a GIFT from GOD... we do not naturally possess it...
4. If you are not yet a Christian, I am asking you to see Christ appealing to you to come to him for salvation... "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest!"
5. See the price he paid for sinners like you and me! He shed his blood to pay the penalty for sins... to atone for our sins
6. By simple faith in Christ, all your sins will be forgiven... and you will be one of his
7. He will set you on a race to run for him... a race of LOVE... the end of that race is heaven
8. COME!

Christians:

B. How is Your Love Relationship with Christ?

1. Does your heart still melt when you hear of his love for you, of his death for you?
2. Do your eyes water when you are convicted of your sins?
3. Do you have a growing passion for his glory?
4. Do you love to spend time with him in prayer?
5. Do you enjoy singing songs to him in private worship?
6. Do you delight in reading his word, seeing all his promises toward you?
7. WHAT is going on in your heart?
8. Have you forsaken your first love? Or have you grown from your first love to an even deeper love for Christ and for others?

C. If You Can Honestly Say Your Heart is Growing Colder to Him... this sermon is a call to REMEMBER, REPENT, and RESUME

1. Remember how things used to be
2. Repent of what has taken Christ's place
 - a. Perhaps it is a sin pattern... perhaps you've allowed some aspect of the world to drive out your love for Christ
 - b. Perhaps you are addicted to sexual immorality on the internet or in movies or books
 - c. Perhaps you are addicted to materialism... to money and possessions
 - d. Perhaps you are bitter at God because of some painful trial his wisdom has brought you through
 - e. Perhaps you just got lazy in your quiet times, gave off carefully watching over your soul, became gradually bored with the Bible, found prayer to be a greater and greater burden
3. Resume: WHAT WE DO and HOW WE LOVE are related

John 14:15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command.

Or... perhaps the MORE YOU OBEY, the more you will love!