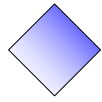


# The Voice of Truth



February 9, 2014

## Please Hurry, We Want To Get Home!

By Jimmy Pettigrew

We live in a fast paced world. We want everything fast. We want our cars fixed fast. We can get our oil changed quickly. We want our food to be delivered fast. We want our pictures processed within an hour. We drive up to the bank, and do our banking in the car. Why? It's fast. We can pull up to a drive-thru window and get our medicines fast. Some funeral homes in California offer drive up service. You just drive up to the window, sign the guest book, view the body, and drive off without even leaving the security of your car.

This "drive-thru" quick service trend has even crept in the church. We want all services done fast! We want the entire service, not just the sermons, not lasting more than 20 to 25 minutes. This allows members of the church to beat the denominational members to the restaurants, or not be late to watch the ball games on TV, or maybe go home to do some house or yard work.

Brethren, something is definitely wrong when people are in such a hurry to get through worship hour so they can get home or attend to more "urgent" matters. We meet only three or four hours a week out of a total of one hundred sixty-eight hours. Do we yearn to come together with fellow Christians in a building designed as a meeting place to worship the Creator? Some brothers and sisters only make it one hour a week. It's the Lord's Day not the Lord's hour. Something is deeply wrong if our hearts are not thrilled at the opportunity to meet with the saints in unity and fellowship to worship God. The early church assembled together every day (Acts 2:46). We meet a small fraction of the time they did. Yet, people still complain when worship goes more than 10 or 15 minutes over. Do we have a better place to go to later? I don't think we do. If

the Christian will die for Christ, certainly he will not complain if the worship services go over. If you are a Christian, where else would you want to be?

The real problem is in the heart. The heart is sick if one must be begged, prodded and coaxed to attend the services of the Lord's church at any time! If we love the Lord as we should, we would be at every service. If we love our brethren as we should, we would stay a little longer so we could fellowship together. To meet at any time with the saints to study the most precious book divine that tells of everlasting life and what to do to obtain it is the desire of everyone who truly wants to go to heaven. Our love for God compels us to be where He is. On Sunday and Wednesday night, He is with those who have gathered to worship Him. A Christian attends the services because he loves the church. We do not neglect that which we love. When a person loves the church, that one does not hurt the church by his neglect. He does not willfully absent himself from the services of the church, or complains that the service is too long, not if he loves it. Golgotha has completely lost its meaning to once redeemed souls whose spiritual thirst can be quenched in 20 or 25 minutes.

Yes, our world is fast paced. Yes, it does seem like we are always on the run. The real question is "Do you have time for our God?" He is always there for us, "... I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5). Are you there for Him? I pray that God will help us to understand the need, the purpose, and the power of attendance at Bible classes and worship services, whenever the doors are open. I look forward to seeing you at every service no matter how long the services might be! ♦

### THINK! THINK! THINK!

What sort of church would the Lord's church be if every member were just like me? ♦

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## “Leaving Your First Love”

By Jarrod Jacobs

The adult class began this quarter studying the book of Revelation on Wednesday evening. I find the book of Revelation to be an amazing book that unfortunately is ignored all too often by brethren.

As is normal for me, after the class, I continue to think about the subject studied. Last week was no exception. As I thought about our study, and the various points made, it hit me that I had missed an application point in our study. This point, I believe, will tie together several key New Testament Scriptures; and I believe, help us to harmonize more of the Bible. Our study begins in **Revelation 2:4-5**, where Jesus said, *“I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.”*

Some forty years after their beginning in **Acts 19**, the church at Ephesus was to be commended for many things. Yet, in spite of the many commendable qualities they possessed, Jesus said they had developed a very serious problem. They had *“left (their) first love”* (**Rev. 2:4-5**). What is their “first love”? Last Wednesday night, we spent time discussing this question, and some very well thought-out and appropriate responses were made. Yet, (as always happens with me) afterward, I thought of something else I believe would be appropriate and helpful to our study, and wanted to include it here.

First, when we think about “love” as was discussed in **Revelation 2**, we need to be reminded that God Himself is described as “love.” John (the inspired writer of **Revelation, 1:1, 11**) wrote to the saints, telling them, *“God is love”* (**I Jn. 4:8, 16**). Through a word study, we find the original word translated “love” in English is the Greek word “agape.” Therefore, in these verses, God is compared to love itself. (Like Jesus was once called the “door”, “shepherd”, “lamb” and other things in Scripture.)

When I think about “love”, my mind also goes to **I Corinthians 13:1-8** where the apostle Paul admonishes the Corinthians to remember to love. To paraphrase, he says that without love as the motivator for the things he was doing, he is nothing and there is no spiritual profit for him if he acts without love. Does this sound familiar? Friends, the warning Paul gave the Corinthians was something the Ephesians LIVED in **Revelation 2!** The context of **I Corin-**

**thians 12-14** discusses miraculous spiritual gifts. In **I Corinthians 13**, they are reminded of their need for love, and letting love be their motivation for everything, INCLUDING the exercise of these spiritual gifts, for they would soon end, (**v. 8-10**); but faith, hope, and love remains to this day (**v. 13**).

Seeing this is true, we return to our text of **Revelation 2:1-8**. Here, the Ephesians were condemned for willingly leaving their “first love”. They were told to *“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent”* (**v. 5**). Understanding that John equates God with love (**I Jn. 4:8, 16**); can we not then see that the Ephesians had in essence left God behind in their good actions (**v. 2-3**)? This they had done, and were condemned for it. They in a real sense had become like the Pharisees, who did good things at times (Christ never condemned their good, only their disobedience and hypocrisy), but were doing it for the wrong reason, or had the wrong motivation! For example, are fasting, prayers, and giving wrong? No! Yet, the Pharisees were condemned for their wrong motivation — to be seen of men (**Matt. 6:1-18**). In **Revelation**, instead of the Ephesians doing things because it was “of God” and allowing their love for God to motivate them, their good works became merely something that “they did”.

Another lesson for us is that what the apostle Paul warned of happening in **I Corinthians 13** was in fact something that had happened to the Ephesians! The warning that if things were done without love, it became vain, was something Christ said the Ephesians were living. They *“left (their) first love.”* This means the great and commendable things like their labor and patience, not enduring evil ones, testing the false teachers, and hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans, etc., (**v. 2-3, 6**) became of no profit to them! (**I Cor. 13:1-3**) If this is not true, then why did Christ demand repentance of these people? It was not that they needed to repent of their good works. Rather, they need to repent and return to the correct motivation behind those good works! Their “first love,” God (**I Jn. 4:8, 16**), needed to be their motivation, and at this point in time, He was not! Therefore, they were to suffer what the Corinthians were warned about (**I Cor. 13**) if they did not repent (**Rev. 2:5**)!

Continued from Page Two, "Leaving Your First Love"

### Conclusion

What can I learn from this? Let me learn that God is just as concerned about my motivation as He is my obedience to His commands! When it comes to my worship, my worship to God is to be done *"in spirit AND in truth"*, not just one or the other (**Jn. 4:24**). In like manner, any aspect of my obedience and faithful living must be motivated by my true love toward God. This is made abundantly clear when Jesus said, *"If you love me, keep my commandments"* (**Jn. 14:15**). Parallel to this is another statement made by Christ: *"If a man love me, he will keep my words"* (**Jn. 14:23**). Again, we see love (God) as the motivation behind our every action (**Col. 3:17**)! Ignoring the warning to the Corinthians (**13:1-3**) and doing things because "I" think they are righteous, instead of because of love or God motivating me, will result in my being in the same place spiritually as the Ephesians!

Friends, let us examine ourselves (**II Cor. 13:5**). What motivates us to be obedient? Is it worry over what others might think, or true love? Is our worship to God something

we do from "habit" and "learned behavior" or something we are doing *"in spirit and in truth"*? Be honest!

Remember your "first love"! When we first obeyed the gospel (**Mk. 16:16**), we did it out of a love and admiration and appreciation to the God of Heaven who sent His Son to die as a sacrifice for mankind (**Rom. 5:8; Jn. 3:16; II Cor. 5:20**). We marveled at a salvation available to all (**Titus 2:11-12**), and were appreciative that we could share in it. Is our continued faithfulness (**Rev. 2:10b; I Cor. 15:58**) motivated by this same God, our "first love"? If so, remain faithful and steadfast and tell others of the love of God, the sacrifice of Christ, and the joy of obedience when we are in a right relationship with God (**II Tim. 2:2; Mk. 16:15; Rom. 6:16-18; Acts 8:8**).

If this is not the case, and we have different motivations now than we did when we first became Christians, then repent today, as the Ephesians needed to do (**Rev. 2:5**). Our works will be as nothing and be of no profit if we are not motivated by the right One (**I Cor. 13:1-3**)!

Credit: The Old Paths - 10/24/10 ♦

## "WHICH CHURCH SHOULD I ATTEND?"

### One Where His Name Is Glorified

**Acts 4:12** - No other name whereby we might be saved.

**Acts 11:26** - God gave the name Christian

**1 Peter 4:16** - We can glorify God in this name.

### One Where His Teachings On Salvation Are Followed

**John 14:6** - Only He is the way to heaven.

**Hebrews 5:9** - All must obey Him to be saved.

**John 8:24** - He said we must believe on Him.

**Luke 13:3** - He said we must repent.

**Matthew 10:32-33** - He said we must confess Him.

**Mark 16:16** - He said we must be baptized to be saved.

### One Where His Will Is Followed In Worship

**John 4:24** - Worship must be sincere and proper actions.

**Acts 20:7** - Lord's Supper on the first day of the week.

**Colossians 3:16** - Singing praises to God.

**Acts 2:42** - Prayer and teaching.

**1 Corinthians 16:1-2** - Giving of our means on the first day of the week.

YOU SHOULD ATTEND THE CHURCH OF CHRIST *"The churches of Christ salute you."* (**Romans 16:16**) ♦

*A faith that will not take us to worship will not  
Take us to heaven!* ♦

## THE SIN OF DOING NOTHING

He made no mistakes and took no wrong roads;  
 He never fumbled the ball;  
 He never went down beneath the load.  
 He lost no hard fights in defense of the right;  
 He never bled with his back to the wall.  
 He never fell faint in his climb to the light;  
 He simply did nothing at all.  
 So death came nigh, for life slipped away,  
 And he feared for the Judgment Hall.  
 When they asked him why, he said with sigh:  
 "I simply did nothing at all."  
 So, God will pardon your blunders, my friend,  
 And regard with pity your fall.  
 But the one big sin that surely means Hell,  
 Is simply to do nothing at all. ♦

## GOD HAS A RIGHT

Author unknown

God has a right to a definite part of your time  
 — He has the power to take all of it.  
 God has a right to a definite part of your money  
 — He has the power to take all of it.  
 God has a right to be glorified through your tongue  
 — He has the power to take all of it.  
 God has a right to be honored through your influence  
 — He has the power to take all of it.  
 God has a right to your life  
 — He has the power to take all of it. ♦

## What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear and Learn - Rom. 10:17 m. 10:9-10 ; 1 Pet. 3:21 ; John 6:45; 17:3  
 Believe - Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24  
 Repent - Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30  
 Confess the Lord - Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21  
 Be Baptized - Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27  
 Continue in the Apostles' Teaching - Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17

### About the Hillcrest church of Christ

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#### How to Contact Us

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#### Our Address

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 Green Bay, WI 54313



#### Schedule of Assembly

Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am  
 Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am  
 Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm\*

\*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com