

What the World Needs Now

Revelation 2:1-7

“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

“I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.’ (Revelation 2:1–7)

Big Idea: The Lord Jesus Christ combines truth and love in one person. To abandon either is not just to deny Christianity, it is to deny Christ. Because Jesus is Lord, we must overcome. . .

I. With Truth

Jesus begins with commendation for the church at Ephesus. He knows they have been faithful in the past to defend the truth of the gospel. Paul had warned these Ephesian elders that false teachers would come among them (Ac. 20:29). And Jesus had alerted the Church to the reality that false teachers are seldom obvious. They are like “wolves in sheep’s clothing” (Mt. 7:15). False teachers are often favorite pastors or close friends or even family members. No matter the relationship, the Lord said that every teacher’s doctrine must be tested (1 Th. 5:21; 1 Co. 14:29; 1 Jn. 4:1). The false teachers apparently found a way to compromise with idolatry and immorality (2:20-21; cf. Ac. 15:29).

II. In Love

As pleased as Jesus had been with the Ephesians’ doctrinal fidelity, he is not pleased with them now. Apparently their focus on rooting out false doctrine had created a culture of suspicion to the point that they have run out of brotherly love (2 Jn. 5). William Barclay said, “the eagerness to root out all mistaken men had ended in a sour and rigid orthodoxy.” So essential is this mark of love that Jesus grants the world the right to dismiss our own profession and even our message if they do not see us loving one another. In fact, this passage shows us that a church that fails to love will have its lampstand removed if it does not repent. In other words, it will no longer be a true church of Jesus Christ.

Questions for Reflection/Discussion:

1. Do you tend to emphasize truth or love in your relationships with others? Why so?
2. How does Jesus embody both truth and love perfectly?
3. What will it look like for you to hold these two in better balance in your own life?
4. Who is someone you know who embodies both truth and love well?