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Revelation

Chapter 2 - Revealing the Secrets to Overcoming Darkness

Focus on the Light (The Love of God) (vs. 1-7)

Revelation 2:1-7: “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: ‘I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name’s sake, and have not grown weary. ‘But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.’ Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. ‘Yet this you do have, that you

hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'

Well, we're in a book that's revelatory, right?

"Apokalypsis" - unveiling, uncovering, and so it shouldn't be hidden to us. In fact, it's uncovering the hidden things and revealing to us the mysteries. One of the great mysteries that He begins to reveal to us at the very beginning in Chapter 1 is the mystery of the light. It's interesting that in the description of Christ we see His face shining as the sun. So, the great mystery of the light. What is the light? Well, John, remember, is the author that Christ chose to write through. So, the Spirit of God moves through this man by the name of John, who was an apostle. What makes him unique? Well, I think one of the things that makes John unique is he seems to be the one that's stuck on this whole concept of love. We know that he was among the closest of the three, Peter, James and

John, but here is this man that literally describes himself as a disciple whom Jesus loved, and we see him leaning against Christ. So, it is this disciple that will be the one that proclaims the light of Christ and the light to the churches.

If you go all the way back to John 3, which is a hallmark text written to a man that is immersed in the Judaism, we find a strange declaration to this man that probably in some ways has found himself distant from relationships and as a Sanhedrin, almost divorced from the feelings and emotions, and yet he turns to Christ and he goes, “I know you have something. I know you have something here.” And you can sense the hunger of Nicodemus as he comes to Jesus. We believe that the Gospel of John was actually focused upon the Stoics of that time. The Stoics, believing that there was a force in the cosmos that literally brought order to the universe. It was a force they called “logos”. John will start off, “In the beginning was the *logos*.” This is the force of order. But then he goes on and he says, “But I'm telling you something about this force. It's not only a force, He's God and He's personal.” So, he says, “The

logos became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld the glory, the glories of the only begotten.” You go, “Wow. You mean order can be personal? Order can be loving? You can have right and wrong and still love?” It's impossible for man to put those two together, but God met those two together through the person of Jesus Christ. So, He begins to explain. Well, of course as He's talking to Nicodemus, He begins to tell him something that Nicodemus has a hard time fathoming, and that's that whole concept of love.

He states in John 3, and we're going to jump on a head here in verse 16, one verse that you're probably fairly familiar with, that God so loved the world. Now, John is going to be talking about two things. One is of course obviously the love of God and then the other is how that kind of parallels with truth and light. When you think about it, what is the light? That's the question you have to ask yourself because the church is to be that city set on a hill like a light set on a hill. What is the light? Well, it's pretty simple to understand if you read John 3 and if you look in verse 16,

“For God so loved the world, that He gave...”

So, we're beginning to hear the love of God and the whole purpose of Christ coming.

Now, John 3:16 you're familiar with, sometimes 17 isn't read, but just as a reminder, Christ says, “I didn't come into the world to condemn or to judge the world, but to save it.” Now, that's the love of God because we deserve being condemned, but the love of God is, “I'm going to save you instead.”

Now, if you look in verse 18,

(John 3:18) “He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already...”

Then verse 19, he's going to actually use a parallel here,

(John 3:19) “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world...”

What is the Light? The love of God. Because the Light is that which brings hope and that which brings a purpose, and that which brings joy. What is the joy and the purpose? God loves you, and He's come to rescue you. So, I can't think of a brighter light, can you? That's why Paul,

when he comes to the Corinthians, he says in 1 Corinthians 2, “I came to you knowing nothing, but Jesus Christ crucified, and He's here to save you. So, I'm not here to convolute or to argue or debate with fanciful words.” As he says in 1 Corinthians 1, “Look the wisdom of the world really can't understand these things.” Then he says that in Chapter 2 and reiterates it as well. So, his point being that there is something far greater here and it is the love of God. This is what the church should be proclaiming.

As you go into the Book of Revelation, it is the reason why John was chosen and if you look in Chapter 1 in particular, it says,

(Revelation 1:3) “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.”

(Revelation 1:4) John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him...”

Which is basically the gospel, by the way. That's the good news, right? Grace and peace? What is it?

(Romans 5:1) “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

“Peace with God.” Think about that.

(Revelation 1:4) “John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne.”

And we talked about that. I don't want to belabor this too much, but I really believe he's referring to the fact that He's in direct contact with the ministers of the church. Now, we know that there are seven spirits that are mentioned in Isaiah. We won't go into that, but the point is that He's intimately acquainted with what's going on with His body and He's the one that has endowed them with the desire to do the right thing.

If you go on,

(Revelation 1:5) “and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us...”

He's the one who loves us.

As he comes to verse 7,

(Revelation 1:7) “BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS...”

Or more specifically, He comes with His saints. What an interesting and wonderful point that though we should and deserve eternal death and we had crucified Him, “Behold, He comes.” As Scripture says, “I have the keys of death and Hades for you. I came to free you. I came to free you from death. I came to free you from,” as we understand the word, it's a compound word of Hades; a place of insignificance. “And I came to free you from these things.” And what a wonder that is. How could it be? One of the great songs that I oftentimes think of, that hymn, “*How can it be that Thou my God, shouldst die for me? Amazing love.*” Right? So, that's the Light, and it shouldn't surprise us that the pictures that we see in Revelation 1 is Christ standing among candlesticks, and there's seven of them. As He stands among them, He's got something in His right hand, and it's seven stars. So, the power of lighting these is in whose hand? Right. The church has no power to proclaim this love without Christ.

It is the love of Christ that we proclaim, and Christ can see the heart of those that will proclaim Him, or those that will proclaim them. But He has the power of these stars, and He will light, but He's looking. The fact that it says that He stands in the midst is telling us that He's intimately acquainted with everything that's going on in all the churches. Where is the mind? Where is the heart? Where is the focus of Christ? In the church, and He knows what you're doing and He knows what's happening. In fact, as we go through these seven churches, you're going to see His intimate involvement in these. So, He's intimately acquainted with all of our ways, right? So, this interesting picture and as He stands around, He goes, “I literally made you to be lights, but that's in My power.”

So, as we come now to Chapter 2, we begin to look at the seven churches and He begins to say, “This is necessary for you to be lit. This is what will overcome,” and we'll actually see that word repeated over and over again seven times at least, “overcome darkness.”

If you read with me,

(Revelation 2:7) “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes...”

Once again, to all you people who have Nike tennis shoes, it is the word “*nikaō*” or “nike” that is used in the text and what it's talking about is victory. You can be victorious over these things, and there are things that each church really struggles with. Different churches struggle with different things, just like different people struggle with different things. Just because someone might say, “Well, I don't struggle with that, but this guy seems to have a hard time.” Well, good for you, but you're struggling with something else. So, don't get too cocky about that.

So, all the way through, you're going to see the word “overcome”.

In verse 7 to the Church of Ephesus, he says, “I want you to overcome.”

If you drop on down a little bit further, he's talking to the Church of Sardis, “To you, who overcomes.”

(Revelation 2:11) ““He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.””

You drop on down with Pergamum,

(Revelation 2:17) “... To him who overcomes...”

Thyatira in verse 26, “He who overcomes...”

All the way through, what does He want them to do? Ok, He wants them to be victorious. So, what He's doing is He's, if we can put it this way, unveiling the secret to overcoming and to overcoming the things that we wrestle with. Once again, we all wrestle with different things. However, I have found, strangely enough, that I probably wrestle with all seven of them. That in some ways, these different things are a part of my life as well. So, I think you're going to find the same thing true in your life, but there are strengths and weaknesses, and as we see in Ephesus, there's a particular weakness that he deals with. Remember, His goal is for that church to be a light, and specifically, to demonstrate that which brings hope, that which brings love, that which brings righteousness, that which brings good, that which brings joy and purpose to

people's life. That's the Light, and of course, that's only through the love of God. So, the church should be proclaiming this.

Now, let me just, once again, reiterate this very simple point. John is being used to write the Book of Revelation so that you might comprehend that this is a letter of love. Once again, John 15, who does God reveal things to? Those He loves. He tells us specifically. He tells us in Amos that God doesn't do anything until He reveals to His servants what He's going to do. So, the ones that will see what is going on in this particular text are the ones that love God. If you want to understand Revelation, guess what, love God. The more you love God, the more it will become clear to you, and hopefully as we read through this, you're going to see the love of God being exemplified.

Just as a reminder, in the Gospel of John, John uses the word “love” over 50 times. Now, just to kind of put that in context, if you were to take Matthew, Mark and Luke, all together, they use the word “love” 30 times. Paul will write to the church at Ephesus, and the whole concept of

love is going to be something that he's going to be dealing with them in their church. In the Book of Ephesus, Paul will use the word “love” 18 times. There will be no other epistle that comes close to that; even Corinthians, which has the love chapter in it, will use it 16 times. But the little Book of Ephesians, he will interject over and over again about the love of God.

So, as we come to this passage in Chapter 2, we're going to understand that the greatest source of light is the love of God, and it's the one point that the church at Ephesus seems to be weak on.

We pick up Revelation 2:1,

“To the angel...”

Once again, more specifically, “to the messenger,”

“...of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand...”

What is He telling us? It's within His power to display the light, right?

“...the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands...”

Who knows intimately and is intimately acquainted with them, and who will guide and direct them in the way that they should go. Now, the one thing that He's going to emphasize, and once again we were talking about the description of Christ in Chapter 1 and the different sources of description are going to be pointing to specific things in each church. So, the one thing that is specific to the church at Ephesus is Christ's concern for their light. He is very concerned about their light.

Now, if we understand light correctly, going back to the Gospel of John and I guess you could even go into 1 John, because I think in 1 John, a small book, 36 times, he uses the word "love". It was said of John in his old age that he began to get a form of dementia, but he went around saying to everybody "love one another, love one another, love one another." It's a good thing to remember, isn't it?

So, as we turn to the church in Ephesus, and by the way, on Mount Pion, we understand that literally there is a place in which they believe is the grave of John in which he died there, and they actually believe that Timothy is buried right alongside him. So, it was pretty interesting

that in this arena of Ephesus which is really a godless city, as we'll go on to see.

“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this:

(Revelation 2:2) ‘I know your deeds...’

“I know your works. I know the things that you're doing, the things that you're producing.”

“... and your toil...”

“*Kopos*,” and it really is making a reference to sorrowful labor. Ministering can be difficult, and you have to deal with these things called people and they’re not always easy to deal with, but it's just the nature of man and it's very easy to get into realm of laborious work that is toilsome and sorrowful and forget what it's really all about. So, he says, “I know you're working really hard, and I know that you're doing it for Me (the great sorrow), and I know your perseverance; that you're hanging in there, that you're holding up under the pressure, so to speak (*hypomonē*).”

“... and that you cannot tolerate evil men...”

That's an interesting phrase, Have you ever had one of those days, “I just can't take it anymore”? It's that word, you just can't endure, evil men, right.

“... and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles...”

Of course, 2 Corinthians 11 talks specifically about many will be deceivers and even though they're really vessels of Satan, will disguise themselves as apostles, as angels of light, which is strange. We see that specifically, in the Book of Jude as well.

“... who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false.”

It's kind of like, “Aha! Eureka!” That’s actually the word that he uses there, “Eureka! We found them. Aha! Gotcha.” It's easy to get into that whole realm of “We’ve got to get the bad guys out” because there are a lot of bad guys out there. When you consider and understand the area of the City of Ephesus, and as you look at these seven cities, there's probably not one that's more than 40

miles from the other, and they say that it's actually a mail circuit. So, we're starting off with Ephesus, we'll go into Smyrna. It's just basically the mail circuit, but they're very close together. So, they also influence each other, and Ephesus was one of the greatest influences of, not only Greek philosophy, but it had a tremendous influx of the east and more specifically, mysticism. So, with the mysticism came the goddess Diana, which was named according to the Romans, but Artemis, according to the names of the Greek, and they had built this humongous temple unto her. From what we understand, it's basically a football field and a half long and as a football field is wide, about a football field and a half wide. So, it was pretty huge, and had 127 columns that are 6 stories tall that surround us and they are in jasper. From what we understand, you could actually see a few of them even today if you go to Istanbul there is a large cathedral. In fact, it was the largest cathedral for up to 1,000 years. When Ephesus had collapsed, they had gone in and taken some of these great columns and put them in their cathedral. It was like 500 AD or something like that. So, you can actually see them. Made of Jasper. Think about

that. So, there's a grand and glorious place and it was the focal point of Ephesus which really encouraged all kinds of debauchery, all kinds of terrible and horrific, immoral things as part of the worship. Drugs were involved as part of the worship as well. But we also know that it was big business, and it was one of the great businesses of that town. We read of that specifically in Acts 19.

As you go into Acts 19, let's take a moment to turn there. Justin had said, "You didn't put what I was supposed to read" and I said, "Well, I was hoping to get to maybe more than one church, but I'm going, 'I don't think so.'"

But if you look with me in Acts 19, remember, Paul finds himself in Ephesus, right? One of the first people that he comes across are, strangely enough, John the Baptist's disciple. Now, John baptized in repentance, and in a way, you could say that John was calling people to get their act together. "Look, do what's right." So, the Law is still shouting, "Repent!" And if you also understand what the Law is about, the Law is calling upon you to do the right thing by sheer resolve, by your own resolve. Now, what we know is there's no power in that. It's not 'sustainable.'

That's one of the new words that they say of the millennials. So, I'm fitting right in. The point is that this is a kind of place that has this, and if you drop on down to Chapter 19, it is that kind of by sheer resolve that these disciples have come in and they're going to try to do the right thing. Now, what we're going to see is kind of a series of those that are trying to do the right thing in this city that's just a terrible, horrific kind of city to be in if you're trying to do the right thing. So, the extremity of that is, “Ok, we've got to really discipline ourselves.” So, John and the disciples would fit in with this in this extremity, and Paul would say, “Yeah, but you don't have the power which is the Spirit of God. You need the Spirit of God to do this.” So, they say, “We didn't know there was a Holy Spirit.” I'll let you read the text.

So, you drop on down a little bit further and Paul is teaching in the synagogues. Of course, these are the people that are, “La, la, la, la, la.” So, he begins to teach, and after a while, they begin to get a little upset at him because he teaches about grace and the love of God, and they're not really happy about that. So, he ends up,

strangely enough, in renting a school by the name of Tyrannus, which is probably where we get the word “tyrannical”. But what we know is that they were Stoics and people that, once again, by sheer self-discipline and sort of dictatorial attitude and harshness, tyrannous attitude, that “We're going to do the right thing.” There were people that actually wanted to get their house in order. Of course, in Ephesus, people were in disarray. We'll see that as we go into text. So, there are these people. So, these are the people that are listening to Paul and they're hearing righteousness, but they're hearing righteousness with love, and they're drawn to it. He stays there for like 2 years of preaching this. Then it kind of introduces us to these Jewish exorcists that begin to try to call out the demons. Once again, it's kind of man trusting his in his incantations and his formulas. Now, the reason why that's important for you to remember is that the goddess Diana in the temple, and they actually believed that she fell from the sky. So, we don't know if she was a meteor or whatever. Anyway, they believed that she fell from the sky, and they put her in the temple. So, the actual form of Diana was kind of contorted and mixed up

and it'd be hard to tell if it was a woman or what it was. But then they began to make statues that made her look a lot nicer, and of course, those sell better anyway. But here you are in the synagogue, and if you were to look all along, parts of her were incantations and writings and things. So, people would memorize and write them down; amulets, they would write them out and they would hold them on themselves, and they'd say, "By this we're protected; by this we're healed." So, what God does, is He goes, "Ok. I'm going to have Paul walking through, and if they just touch something that he has or something he wears, or a cloth that's on him, they'll be healed, and they're going to see real power." So, they are immediately identified with this. They go, "Wow, witchcraft bigger than ours." Because it's a very superstitious place. So, you have these people that are trying to get the evil out, but the only thing that happens is it just keeps rotating over and over again. In fact, it becomes a profession.

(Acts 19:14) "Seven sons of one Sceva..."

These guys are professional exorcists. Well, if you're professional exorcist, that tells me you're not getting rid

of the problem because, you know, job security type thing. So, here you have these men and they're doing this. Of course, they call out to the demons, the demons go, "Ok, we know Paul. We know Jesus" because they thought they would use Jesus' name because Paul seems to be pretty successful.

(Acts 19:11) "God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul,

(Acts 19:12) so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body..."

But of course, that's exactly how they think. So, God is speaking to them where they are, isn't He?

So, within the passage, it goes on and says that the Spirit then subdues the seven sons of Sceva because they're trying to adopt a power that they don't have. So, you have John the Baptist disciples; they have not the spirit of power within them to do the right thing. They have people that are writing things down and hoping for the best of good luck, but that has not the power and they have people that are trying to cast out the demons, but they have not the power, and God is saying, "Now, let Me

introduce you to the power.” So, He begins to show and demonstrate it, and it's so effective.

If you look within the passage, it says,

(Acts 19:19) “And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.”

Which, by the way, all the books and all the things that the writings off of Diana were sold at a really high price, but they would embellish them with things which made them more expensive. The problem, if you look within Chapter 19 that they have with Paul is that he's affecting the business. This is the reason why they want him dead.

(Acts 19:24) “For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, was bringing no little business to the craftsmen.”

Then he says at the end of verse 25,

“Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business.”

It's not religion, it's business, and that's the trend that you keep seeing. Religion keeps going into the realm of business. It's not religion, it's business; not a true faith. Of course, everybody goes, "Ok. You mean, he's going to take away our money?" and he goes, "Yeah." He goes, "Ok, we want him dead." So, of course, they try to kill him, and it says that they were all filled with rage. Of course, once you get a group of people filled with rage and they start trampling the streets, it's not long before you get other people, and they don't even know why they're there. It just forms a big crowd.

It says,

(Acts 19:29) "The city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord..."

(Acts 19:30) "And when Paul wanted to go into the assembly..."

(Acts 19:32) "So then, some were shouting one thing and some another, for the assembly was in confusion and the majority did not know for what reason they had come together."

This is Ephesus. It's a place in which there seems to be little or no control, and people are going after things that bring them wealth and power, and if it bothers or disturbs what they're going after, what their desires are, their cravings, then they're coming after you. That's the city. Now, you can imagine if you're a church and your goal is to proclaim the holiness of God, that it would be difficult to deal with the loose living in the realm in which you exist. Paul will say in the next chapter he'll go into, and he'll finally come back to Ephesus, and he'll go, "Look, there are going to be people that are coming in and they're going to be like savage wolves and they're going to try to take the people away from the truth. You've got to protect them." I can just see the leaders of the church of Ephesus, "We've got to protect them." It's not long before what often begins with the zeal for good ends up being a destructive passion and it doesn't take much for somebody to be zealous to help somebody to turn into hate and condemnation and criticism and oppressive demands because you're trying to control, right? You're just trying to help, but you get so immersed in this. So, the point of Revelation 2 is He says, "Look, I know you're

working hard to try to maintain some sense of decorum, to do the right thing. That you put to test those that are lying and they're drawing people away. You have a perseverance. You've done the right thing. You've endured for My namesake. You've not grown weary in maintaining the cause. (Revelation 2:4) But this is the problem..." And anytime you have the phrase "against" coming from Christ, it's not a good thing. I mean, if God be for us, who could be against us?

(Revelation 2:4) "But I have this against you, that you have left your first love."

Now, the word "left" that He uses within the text is actually the same word that is used for divorce. It has a connotation of sending something away. More specifically, it has a connotation of falling out of love, or if I could put it this way, no longer caring for the person. What has happened is that in the process of pursuing what is right, they seem to have left what the focus has always been, and that is to love one another. The reason why Jesus Christ came was to save, not to destroy, and

you find yourself becoming a destroyer rather than a rescuer.

When you read in the Book of Ephesians, as Paul writes the letter earlier to them, you can begin to see, of course, once again he interjects some 18 times the word “love” in this small epistle. He’s emphasizing to them that “You need to start loving.” Because he already saw that they were waning from this.

In Ephesians 1:4, it reads this way,

“Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

In love

(Ephesians 1:5) He predestined us to adoption as sons...”

Now, what was it that brought you to Christ? It was His love for you that brought you to Him.

So, he'll state,

(Ephesians 2:4) “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,

(Ephesians 2:5) “... (by grace you have been saved).”

It was because He loved us so. The power of God is because He loved us so. That's what draws us to the cross. Look at the cross. He loves us. That's what draws us. So, it's a great mystery.

Of course, in Ephesians 3:17, he declares, “You must be rooted and grounded in this love.” You must be, because this is what we're all about. “Man, it's hard. I'm trying to help these people” and before long, you're shaking them and you're strangling them. Then, they're not breathing.

(Ephesians 3:19) “and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge...”

I mean, all the way through,

(Ephesians 4:2) “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love.”

And that's all the way through the Book of Ephesians.

In fact,

(Ephesians 4:15) “but speaking the truth in love...”

It never tells you not to correct, but He says, “You've got to do this in love. It's got to be the love of Christ that compels you.”

(Ephesians 5:2) “...walk in love...”

(Ephesians 5:25) “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church...”

And all the way through, he keeps emphasizing this whole love thing. In fact, when Paul writes to Timothy, which by the way, Timothy was the pastor of the church at Ephesus, what does he tell Timothy? He says, “Timothy, remind them the goal of our instruction is love.” Why would he say that? Because they were good at instruction. They just weren't good at love. I mean, if you're in a place that is like this, how difficult is it to keep love in the forefront of your mind? So, this is the point that he goes on, he says in verse 5,

(Revelation 2:5) “Therefore remember from where you have fallen...”

Or how you have fallen out. The point is that you need to get back to the fundamentals. Why are we at church? Why do we come together? Why do we come to Jesus? It was the love of God that brought us. He goes, “Keep this always in your mind.” What was it that changed your heart? Did somebody just beat you silly, and then you

came to Jesus? It was the love of Christ that you saw, and you were drawn to Him. Now, if that's what changed you, what do you think will change the other person? Where do you think the power is?

See, you go into the Book of Jude, and he goes, “Look, there are going to be people coming in your love feast, and they're going to be nefarious individuals that are malevolent in spirit and trying to be destructive. He said, “They're going to be coming all around, they're secretive. You know what you need to do? Keep yourself in the love of Christ.” You go, “Well, that's no defense.” Oh, it is a defense because if you are walking in the love of Christ, the people that are seeking for truth will never be dissuaded by the lie. They'll see the love of Christ and they'll always embrace that. The people that are searching for the true light, no problem. The other ones are going to be easily dissuaded, moved away, but not the ones that love and desire the love.

(Revelation 2:5) “Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent...”

Once again, just a reminder, fundamental word means what? It's a compound word, "to think differently; change your way of thinking." So, change your way of thinking. What's the wrong way of thinking? The wrong way of thinking is, "I'm going to get people to do the right thing by oppressing them." And He goes, "That's not going to work." It didn't work with John and his disciples; it didn't work with the seven sons of Sceva; it doesn't work with Tyrannus. It's not going to work. What's going to work is the love of God, which compels. One of the things that Paul says to the church is, "Look, you saw the way that I acted; you saw the things that I did. Now, you imitate this and walk in that same kind of love." Go back to Ephesians 5:1, "Be imitators of God and walk in love, just like Christ."

So, as you come the end of this, he goes,

(Revelation 2:5) "... repent and do the deeds you did at first..."

In other words, "What was it that generated this whole desire to come and follow Me?"

"... or else I am coming to you (quickly) ..."

“Quickly” is inferred within the passage.

“... and will remove your lampstand out of its place—
unless you repent.”

I don't want this to be misconstrued, but I personally do not believe that He's talking about the fact that He's going to do away with the lampstand. I think what He's talking about specifically, and that when He says “remove,” He's emphasizing the place, “That I'm going to move you from your place.” Now, what seems to be the point is that the church at Ephesus was close in proxemics to Jesus. “I'm going to distance Myself from you.” I think one of the great rewards of walking in love, as John gives us this picture is you get to sit next to Jesus; you get to lean on Jesus. One of the advantages of loving God is you get to be close to Him. I mean, you look at some of the others, I don't hardly hear anything about Simeon; some of the others are kind of like way out there, but who is close? The ones that love God. He says, “You're going to lose your place. I have an endearing Spirit. I can see the zeal.” Like in John 2, the zeal for the Father's house consumed Christ, but He did everything that He did out of love. How

do you maintain that? You've got to keep love as the foremost desire that you head toward, not the correction. In 2 Corinthians 2, Paul is talking to the church and they're having to correct somebody that's doing something wrong, and he says, "Ok, you need to back off because it's literally overwhelming him." And then he uses this particular phrase, "For we are not ignorant about the schemes of Satan." What starts off to be a good thing, correction, ends up being an oppressive thing, demonic. How strange that is, and always many times under the guise of "good." "We're doing this to help." But you've got yourself lost. I would just say this to parents, parenting can easily fall in the same trap. You start off, "I want the best for my kids. I want the best for my kids," and you come off and after a while, it just becomes harsh and hard and detached, and you get angry. Everybody gets angry; nothing seems to be working. What's the problem? You're relying on a bad source. You're relying on your ability to oppress somebody into doing right rather than the love of God to change them into doing right. You can go to people and talk to them and shake

them and do all these kinds of things, but it will never really change their lives until the love of Christ compels them. This is why you have to take stands.

In fact, if you look in the passage, it says this,

(Revelation 2:6) “Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.”

To hate that which is evil is a good thing, but you have to have the love of Christ that motivates you. The Nicolaitans basically, is a faith of antinomianism, which is, if I can put it this way, “anti,” without Law. So, what you had was a bunch of teachers that were infiltrating the church. Of course, you're in Ephesus. So, everybody's doing whatever they want to do, and then they hear of this thing called grace, and they go, “Hey, a license to sin.” So, the Nicolaitans began to preach, “You can do anything you want to, because we've been forgiven by Christ and it's all about...” And He says, “No, it's not about that.” Because we know that 1 Corinthians 13 says that love really rejoices in doing what's right. That it's really hard in doing what's right. So, you can see the strain on the people. People are telling lies, they're deceiving. You're

having to wrestle with the deception of the world as well, and the debauchery that is infiltrated. How can you keep yourself pure? You've got to go back to the love of God that changed your heart. If you don't stay there, you'll have no light. There is no light. There's nothing that attracts a person to come when you're shaking your finger at them. God has given them a conscience. They know what's right or wrong. One of the reasons why they're dodging you is because they know what's wrong, but what's going to change them is the love of God.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today and we give You thanks for Your word, and for these examples that You placed before us. Lord, it's our desire to be a light set on a hill; that we proclaim the light of Jesus Christ. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that

whosoever believes in Him should not perish, though we deserve to perish, but we can have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. It's hard for us to keep remembering we're not here to condemn; we're here to save. We're not here to put people in bondage; we're here to set them free. With the difficulties and the problems that surround us in the way that the world even attacks us, it's very easy for us to fall into their same tactics, Lord, but change our hearts. Help us to display the power of Your Light, the power that's in Your hand. Place it upon this church. Cause us to be bright for You, that they might see the love of God, which compels them to do the right thing.

Your heads bowed and your eyes closed. I'm asking you to join me in this desire. Yes, we want you to do what's right, we want you to hate what's wrong, but it's the love of God that has to move you. Without that, there is no power; without that, there is no hope of change; without that, there is no Light.