

Ernie Kuenzli - Our First Love

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And our lesson tonight is sort of the best fit that we have for the concept of walking worthy of the calling which we have received.

Our title is taken from our Lord's words to the Church of Ephesus. It's found in Ephesians, Excuse me, Revelation, the second chapter in verses four and five. 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.

Ephesus represents the first period of the Church in the gospel age, and despite all the good things they had done, they'd left their first love. What or who was that love? If we go to other translations of this verse, we get an insight into that Weymouth Yet I have this against you that you no longer love me as you did at the first the nlt. But I have this complaint against you.

You don't love me or each other as you did at the first. So what the brethren didn't love as they had at the first, was our Heavenly Father, our Lord Jesus, and even one another.

As human beings. What is typically our first love? Probably our mother. She's the one that cares for us beginning in infancy and nurtures us as we grow up into an adult. Our next might be our Father, although sometimes his role as disciplinarian has an impact on that.

As we grow up and we become more self aware, our first love can change to ourself, and sometimes that goes to an excessive degree and becomes pride. As we meet and form relationships with others, our first love can become a boyfriend, a girlfriend, a spouse, and finally, over time, other things can become our first love. Wealth, position, possessions, and they can become idols to us. But here In Revelation the second chapter, verse 4, Jesus is not speaking to us as human beings.

He's speaking about our first love as a new creature in Christ Jesus.

As a new creature in Christ Jesus, why would God be our first love? He's our first love because he's our spiritual Father, begetting us with His Holy Spirit. As Paul brings to our attention in Romans the eighth chapter in verses 14 and 15 for all who are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God. For you have received the spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out Abba Father Jesus becomes associated with our Heavenly Father as our first love because he's our Redeemer, he's our Savior, he's the one who gave his life for us, and the love that exists between Jesus and his bride is expressed beautifully in song of Solomon 2:16.

My beloved is mine and I am his.

We thought it'd be valuable if we considered some others in the Scriptures who perhaps lost their first love and why or why this didn't happen to them. The first we would consider is the Logos, the first being that was created, and we read about him in John 1, verses 1 through 3. In the beginning was the Word or the Logos, and the Word was with the God, and the Word was a God. He was in the beginning with the God, and all things came into being through him, and apart from him nothing came into being that has come into being, and we find this confirmation.

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We find this confirmed. In Proverbs the eighth chapter, we'll read verses 22 and 30. The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way before his works of old, and then I was beside him as a master craftsman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.

The Logos had a great love for his Heavenly Father, and we remember that is expressed so beautifully in Psalms 48. I delight to do your will, O my God, because your law is within my heart. It was this kind of love that led the Logos to humble himself, to be made flesh as a crucial part of God's plan of salvation, as Paul writes about in Philippians the second chapter in verses 6 through 8. He did not require, did not regard equality with God as a thing to be grasped, but he emptied himself, taking the form of a bondservant and being made in the likeness of men. Then being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death of a cross.

Humility was the key to the Logos maintaining his first love in the Heavenly Father. In contrast, Lucifer also created a great spiritual being, did not maintain his first love. For we read about this in Ezekiel the 28th chapter, beginning with verse 12. Thus says the Lord God, you had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom, perfect in beauty. You were blameless in all your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you.

Being created perfect didn't stop Lucifer from becoming unrighteous, and verse 17 tells us why. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty. You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. Because of his beauty, which is something he was given to him, Lucifer became proud, and that was his downfall. As we're told in Isaiah 14, verses 13 and 14, you said in your heart I will ascend to heaven, I will raise my throne above the stars, and of God I will make myself like the Most High.

Pride led to Satan's fall and the leaving of his first love Concerning David. God explicitly tells us in the Scriptures that he was David's first love. Acts 13:22 I have found David, a son of Jesse, a man after my heart, who will do all my will. When God was looking for a replacement for Saul, he found David as an individual, as a young boy who loved him supremely. Still God's Excuse me.

Still David's love for God didn't stop him from making some fairly grievous mistakes. Despite David's error, though, he never lost his overriding love and devotion to God as God expressed it in First Kings the 14th chapter. In verse 8 there he says, you, King Jeroboam, have not been my like my servant David, who kept who kept my commandments and who followed me with all his heart to do only that which was right in my sight. That is an amazing statement. Despite his mistakes, David followed God with his whole heart, and his overriding love for God is confirmed for us in the next chapter.

1st Kings 15:3 King Abijam his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord, like the heart of his father David, and so the lesson we learned from this is to not lose our first love of God, our heart must be wholly devoted to him.

Now one would think that Solomon, David's son and the next king of Israel, would follow in his father's footsteps. Not exactly. We're told in 1 Kings 3:3 that Solomon loved the Lord. He walked at least initially in the statutes of his father David. Nevertheless, Solomon violated one of the commandments that God had given to the nation of Israel, and that was not to intermarry with the people of the land.

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And that proved to be his downfall. 1 Kings 11:1-2 now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh from the nations concerning which the Lord said to the sons of Israel, you shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods. But still Solomon held fast to these in love. The result is mentioned in verse 4. For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away from away to other gods, and his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David, his father, had been in Solomon's case, many pretty faces turned his heart from his heavenly father, the nation of Israel, which God considered to be his firstborn.

From an earthly standpoint, they also lost their first love, you know, at Mount Sinai. God offered them a very special opportunity as recorded for us in Exodus 19 in verse 5 and 6. Now then, if you will indeed obey my voice, God said, and keep my commandment, then you shall be my own possession amongst all peoples, for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, and initially Israel was willing to obey Exodus 24:7. When Moses took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people, they said, all that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.

But God could look down the stream of time and he could see that their heart wasn't fully in it. Deuteronomy 5:29 reads, oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear me and keep my commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever.

Israel's love for God didn't fill their hearts, and when the going got tough or when things were prosperous, they forgot God. They forgot their first love, you know? Later God lamented Israel's failure to maintain their first love for him in Psalms 81, verses 13 and 14. Oh, that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways.

God, through the prophet Isaiah, said about Israel in Isaiah 29:13 because this people draw near me with their words and honor me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from me, and their reverence for me consists of tradition learned by rote. Israel had lost their first love of God, and as a result they played the harlot with false gods, as the prophet Jeremiah writes in Jeremiah 30, 20 and 21 surely as a woman treacherously departs from her lover, so you have dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel. Because they have perverted their way, they have forgotten the Lord their God.

In contrast to Israel, when the Logos was made flesh, the man of Jesus, the man Christ Jesus kept his first love of God because of his humility and the fact that the love of God filled his heart. After 40 days in the wilderness with no food, when challenged by the adversary to fall down and worship him, Jesus response is recorded for us in Matthew 4, verse 10. Jesus said to him, go Satan, for it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and serve him only. When he was called good teacher by a Jewish ruler, Jesus responded, Luke 18:19 why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.

And even with his last breath, dying on the cross to fulfill God's Will Jesus crying out with a loud voice saying, father, into your hands I commit my spirit, and having said this, he breathed his last.

We've created a little table to sort of recap the individuals and groups we've just reviewed. The Logos first love was God, and he kept it because of his humility. On the other hand, Lucifer lost his first love for God because pride came because he got focused on his own beauty. David's first love was God, and he kept that love despite making many mistakes because his heart was wholly devoted to God. Solomon, on the other hand, lost his first love for God because his love for God

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was replaced by his love for his many wives.

He ignored God's counsel to keep separate from the people of the land. Israel lost God as their first love because it was replaced by the idols of the neighboring nations. Like Solomon, they didn't keep separate from the world and as a result, their hearts were removed from God and they forgot it, and Jesus kept his first love for God because of his humility and his great reverence for the heavenly Father that led him to be obedient even to the death of a cross.

Our love for God begins not with us, it begins with Him. As John writes in First John, the fourth chapter, verses nine and ten from Weymouth, God's love for us had been manifest in that he sent his only Son into the world that we might have life through Him. This is love indeed. We did not love God, but He loved us and sent His Son to be an atoning sacrifice for our sins. You know, it's through God's Word, the Scriptures, that we have come to know and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. You know, after revealing his love for us through His Word, God invites us to become his children and to have the same love take root in our hearts as we're told in Proverbs 23:26. Give me your heart, my son, and let your eyes delight in my ways. You know, God offers to beget us as spiritual sons and give us His Spirit so that we might have this same love back toward him, our Lord, and toward one another.

Now we accept the invitation and make an acceptable consecration. Then God begets us with His Holy Spirit and we become new creatures, sons of God. As Paul writes in Romans 8, 15 and 16, where he says, we've received the Spirit of adoptions as sons. We cry out, abba, Father and the Spirit. God's Spirit testifies with our Spirit, that we are his children, with God's Spirit dwelling in our hearts.

This begins God as our first love. As the apostle John writes in 1 John 4. 7, beloved, love is from God, and everyone who loves is begotten of God and knows God.

Now what type of love does the new creature have for God? It is agape love, as Professor Strong's defines it as G26. It means affection. It means benevolence, and Thayers adds to the definition a little bit by saying it means brotherly love, affection, goodwill.

But perhaps the best definition of love is found in the Scriptures itself. In the words of John 1 John 3:16, we know love by this that he laid down his life for us.

Jesus unselfish self sacrificing love as a ransom for Father Adam is the best demonstration of this type of love that there will ever be, and if we have that same type of love, it will be made manifest in our lives by laying it down for our heavenly Father, our Lord, for his truth, and for his children, our brethren.

But we cannot have this type of unselfish love for God and our brethren unless we have God's Holy Spirit, unless we become new creatures in Christ Jesus. For the apostle John brings this to our attention in 1 John 3:14.

For we know that we have passed out of Adamic life, excuse me, Adamic death into life, because we agape the brethren. He who does not agape abides in Adamic death, and the apostle John confirms this in John 1 John 4. 7 Beloved, let us agape one another, for agape is from God, and everybody who agapes is begotten of God and knows God. The apostle goes on to write that

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agape love for God involves then keeping his commandments, 1 John 5, 3 for this is agape agape of God that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome, you know.

This brings us to the subject of God's commandments and how we keep them shows the level of love abiding in our hearts for our heavenly Father. Now the first commandment that God gave to the nation of Israel was recorded in Exodus the 20th chapter. In verse 2 and 3 he says, I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. It was the first of four commandments that focused on Israel's responsibility to their God, and the next three are mentioned following these verses.

Verse 4. You shall not make for yourself an idol or a likeness of anything that is in heaven or on the earth, or in the water under the earth. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes his name in vain and remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, you know, Israel was to put the worship of God above everything else.

At the end of Israel's experience in the wilderness, as they were about to cross the river Jordan and enter the Promised Land, Moses repeated their commandments to them. However, the first commandment had broadened a little bit as we read in Deuteronomy the sixth chapter, beginning with verse four. Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your might. These words which I am commanding you today shall be on your heart, you know, These commandments were more explicit concerning Israel's heart condition toward their God.

And this commandment was to give, was to govern really every aspect of their life, as we read in verses 7 and 9, and you shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, when you rise up, you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and as frontals on your forehead, and you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

At the end of his earthly ministry, the scribe asked Jesus what was the foremost commandment, and Jesus took his response from the words of Deuteronomy 6. Jesus said, the foremost is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.

Jesus reminds the Jews there the true Israelite would love the Lord their God with every aspect of their being, and then he summarized the last six commandments given at Mount Sinai in the next verse. The second is this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these, and then he concluded, according to the Matthew couch, on these two commandments depend the whole law and the prophets.

However, this raises a question. Is this commandment applicable to the followers of Jesus? You know, John wrote in Second John chapter one and verse six, and this is agape, that we walk according to his commandments. Jesus added to this in John 14:15, 21 if you love me, you will keep my commandments. He who has my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me.

And he who loves me will be loved of my Father And I will love him as well. We show our love by keeping Jesus commandments, and where did Jesus commandments come from? From the Father, as Jesus said in John 14:24. He said, the word that you hear is not mine, but the Father who sent me.

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And he adds in John 7:16, My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. God's teachings has come to us through His Son.

Going Back to Proverbs 23:26, we're invited by God to give me your heart, my son, and let your eyes delight in my ways. But later Jesus said, Mark 12:30, the foremost commandment is, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This raises the question, is there a contra? On one hand, God invites us to love him. On the other hand, he commands us to love Him.

Are they both true? God through Moses sort of answers this question when he explains the benefits that fleshly Israel would receive if they love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul and mind.

Deuteronomy 30 and verse 16 in that I command you to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to keep his commandments, that you may live and multiply, that the Lord your God may bless you in the land you are entering to possess it. Israel's life, as well as our life begin, it depends on our loving the Lord with all our heart so that we may walk in his ways.

Now Jesus in Mark 12th chapter and verse 30 said, There were really four requirements to loving our heavenly Father, and the first was, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart. God was to come first in all our affections. Heart is translated from Strong's number G 2588 Kardia. It means the heart, the thoughts or feelings, the affections.

You know, after Moses told Israel that God was going to scatter them, he said in Deuteronomy 4:29, he says, you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find him. If you search for him with all your heart and with all your soul, you know, same thing is true of us. We'll find God if we seek him with all our heart and with all our soul. Now stop and notice something.

Notice what Moses pairs with heart. He pairs soul. It's the same pair that Jesus gave us back in Mark 12 and 30.

The second requirement that Jesus identified about loving God in Mark 12:30 was, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your soul. Meaning God was to come first in every aspect of Our lives soul is translated from Strong's number G5590. 90, and it means breath that is indication also means spirit. You know, we are to love God with every breath of our life. You know, there's a number of scriptures that really pair these two qualities together, saying, we love the Lord our God with all of our heart or all of our affections, and we love him with all our breath or every aspect of our life.

And we'll read just one of these, Deuteronomy 4:29, which says that you, Israel, will seek the Lord your God, and you will find him if you search for him with all your heart and with all your breath. You know, as spiritual Israelites, the same is true for us. We will find God if we seek him with all of our affection and all of our life.

We Read in Deuteronomy 10 and verse 12 Now, Israel, what does the Lord require from you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul? That same requirement is true of us.

And just before Israel entered the Promised Land, Moses warned them. He said in Deuteronomy the 30th chapter. In verse 6 he says, Moreover, the Lord your God, he said, will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all

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your soul so that you may live.

And God does the same thing to us. He will circumcise our hearts to cut off all the affections for earthly things, that we might love him with all of our heart and all of our breath, that we might gain a great spiritual reward.

Near the end of his life, Joshua advised the Israelites to in Joshua 22:5, to only be very careful to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways to keep his commandments and serve him with all your heart and with all your soul to walk in God's ways to keep his commandments successfully. We can only do it if we love him with all of our heart and all of our breath. You know, that's what our Lord did, and that's what we must do, and notice in a couple of verses how the apostle Paul pairs these together. Galatians 6:9 Let us not lose heart or affection in doing good or serving him for in due time we will reap if we don't grow weary.

Singleness of heart is key to successfully serving God. But singleness of heart must lead to singleness of action, as Paul says in Philippians the second chapter and verses 12 and 13 so then, my beloved, work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work at you, both to will in terms of affection and to work in terms of breath for his good pleasure.

The third requirement to loving God that our Lord mentioned in Mark 12:30 is, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your mind. Meaning God has come first in our minds, in our thinking. Mind is Translated from Strong's G1271. It means deep thought, properly the faculty of the mind or its disposition, you know. The Apostle Paul writes in Philippians 2.

5. He says, have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, and the Apostle Paul confirms this in First Corinthians 2:16, when he says, we have the mind of Christ.

We are begotten. This new creature mind is begotten us by God's Holy Spirit.

You know, the Apostle Paul spoke about the importance of keeping this spiritual focus in our minds in Colossians the third chapter, verses 1 and 2. He says, therefore, as you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things that are above. Set your mind on things above, not on things that are on the earth, and Paul confirms this for us in Romans 8:5. He says, those who are according to the Spirit, mind the things of the Spirit.

When Jesus rebuked When Peter rebuked Jesus when he said he was going to go to Jerusalem and die, Jesus in turn rebuked Peter for not having his mind focused in the right direction.

Matthew 16:23 he said to Peter, get behind me, Satan. You are a stumbling block to me, for you are not setting your mind on God's interests but man's. We must set our mind on God's interests.

The last requirement to loving God was expressed in Mark 12:30 by our Lord, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your strength.

All of our strength, all of our force should be used for the Lord. Strength is translated from Strong's number 2479. It means forcefulness or force. But Thayer's definition adds something interesting. It adds the word ability.

We are to love God with all our strength and all of the ability he's given to us. The strength spoken about is not ours, our own, but that which God provides for us as we read about in Ephesians 6:10. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. It's God's strength that enables us to

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do his will.

Peter mentions this for us in 1st Peter 4:11. Whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength that God supplies, and the apostle Paul reinforces this thought in Colossians, the first chapter and verses 10 and 11.

So that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, and he tells us how we're able to do this in verse 11, strengthened with all power according to his glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience.

To recap, we love God with all our hearts, all our thoughts, all our feelings, our affections, which means God comes first in all of our affections. We are to love the Lord with all our soul, with all our breath, with our entire life, which means God is to come first in every aspect of our lives. We are to love the Lord our God with all. All our mind, all our disposition, all our thinking. This means he comes first in our thinking, in our planning.

We mind the things of the Spirit, and finally, we are to love the Lord our God with all of our strength, all of our force, and all of our ability. This means we are to serve the Lord with all of the strength and ability he provides for us.

What's our conclusion?

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. We shall love the Lord our God and His Son Jesus with all of our affection, with all of our breath, with all of our thinking, and with all of our force or ability. You know, if we put and keep the Lord first in everything, we will not lose our first love, as did Lucifer, Solomon, and the nation of Israel.

Loving God with all of our heart, breath, mind and strength is the only way to keep Paul's admonition as recorded for us in Ephesians the fourth chapter in verses 1 through 3. Walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which we have been called, with all humility and gentleness and patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and may the Lord add his blessing.