

## Seven pt1

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Ryan Abernathy / General

Seven / Revelation 2:1–7

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Seven churches. They do not exist anymore, but their legacy does. They were seven churches that mattered to John and they mattered to Jesus. So much so that when he was in exile, John had a vision and in that vision, before he saw the ultimate victory that Jesus would achieve, Jesus gave him a word for these seven churches. And since they are in the Bible, they have a word for us today.

As we leave Easter season, we are going to go on a journey together as a church for the next few months. We are going to spend some time asking ourselves some hard questions about who we are as a church. Who our neighbors are as people. And how we as a church can begin to embody a new way to see and interact with the world- one where the church is increasingly irrelevant and ignored by a culture that needs Jesus more than ever.

To do that, we are going to start in the past, with these 7 churches. One a week for the next 7 weeks. If you want to read ahead, be my guest.

For today, let's turn to [Revelation 2:1-7](#).

First off, let's clear something up. This wasn't written to an angel...that is the word used...but the context is a messenger, probably a pastor, who this is addressed to. Which makes sense. If you want a church to hear a message, probably a good idea to holler at the person who does the messaging regularly.

### **Revelation 1. To Ephesus (2:1–7)**

the logical expectation of John would have been for the letters to make their way to the one individual in the church who would be most responsible for reading and interpreting the letter to the congregation. *How that could have been anyone other than the pastor is difficult to imagine*

And the message is from...well...Jesus- the only One who can hold seven stars and move among seven churches- which are the seven lampstands. He is with all of them- and those lamps represent the presence of the Holy Spirit- without which there is no church.

### **Revelation 1. To Ephesus (2:1–7)**

the message of the passage is clear. The angels, whoever they may be, are firmly in the control of the Lord. Furthermore, he walks about in the midst of the seven lamps, which have been identified as the seven churches. He is fully cognizant of all that is transpiring in the churches, and there is nothing hid from his view. Perhaps here is even more evidence to suspect that the “angels” are, in fact, “pastors.” The Lord walks among his churches, knowing them thoroughly and grasping the lives and ministries of the pastors firmly in his own hand

So the message to this church starts off really positive. Look at verses 2-3.

**First the works of the church are KNOWN.** God sees what they are doing and most likely so does the community around them. A church should be VISIBLE folks. We are not in the way of being hidden- what did Jesus tell us- a city on a hill, a lamp on a stand, a light to the world. One important part of being the church is being noticed- and for the right reasons! **Matthew 5:14-16** (connect light verses in Gospels to the Gospel)

**Second, they are doing the RIGHT work.** They are working hard (toiling) and sticking with the work (endurance) and they are standing against evil and falsehood. *The church is being light and salt- they are pointing to Jesus and they are preserving the community by bringing truth to replace lies.* That is a big deal for the church! Not just are we working, but is our work producing fruit?

**Third, they have not grown weary...**which is saying something. We all know the weariness that comes with serving, especially when the workers are few. Many of us have shouldered burdens for years because we were the people who were their and willing. That patient endurance is commended and celebrated in this letter...and should be in our church as well.

#### **Revelation 1. To Ephesus (2:1–7)**

Kopos, translated as “hard work,” refers to strenuous labor that induces weariness. However, the Ephesian church, in Jesus’ name, had “endured hardships” (kopiaō, derived from kopos) but had not “grown weary” (kamnō). “Patience” translates hupomenō, which by way of derivation comes from hupo meaning “under” and menō meaning “remain” or “abide.” **The picture, therefore, is of one who, not wishing to shirk responsibility, bears the burden of it with determined zeal**

This is all going really well. The compliments are flowing, and I am sure this church and this pastor are grateful for these things being said about them.

#### **Revelation 1. To Ephesus (2:1–7)**

Painting a picture of church life in Ephesus on the basis of v. 2, **one can possibly affirm that the church at Ephesus was a diligent, hardworking church characterized by great patience in the apostolic endeavor, a love for moral purity, and an unquestioned orthodoxy,** which made the congregation quite different from her sister churches

Then the “but” drops... (v4-5)

“I have this against you...” I am sure in that moment the response is...”Look at what we are doing!!” “You just said we are doing a good job!”

Yet the thing that Jesus has against them is serious. They have lost their first love...Him.

**All the works they are doing they once did with joy. They did them because they loved Jesus. They did them to make Him known. Now they just do them...like a kid doing chores...because they feel obligated.**

### **Revelation 1. To Ephesus (2:1–7)**

What is in view in the church of Ephesus is a question of motivation and priority. Certainly, one can do all the right things and yet do them for an inadequate or ignoble reason. One can even do the right things for some of the right reasons but fail in the service of the Lord in terms of the noblest reasoning. Perhaps Ephesus had succeeded well in many areas, but **the maintenance of that success had become more important than the motivation for service**—namely, the love for Christ

How do we get here?

1. We forget why we started doing the work in the first place.
2. We fail to work on the relationship that gave us our passion.
3. We forget the people Jesus called us to love because we first loved Him.

But embedded in the judgement is a reminder- **Remember and Repent.**

There is a way back. We can return to that first love, but it is going to take a turning on our part, because Jesus has not gone anywhere.

### **Revelation 1. To Ephesus (2:1–7)**

The church is called first, to remember; second, to repent; and third, to activate themselves in terms of what they did “at first” or in the earliest days of the church in Ephesus. Here **repentance is conditioned upon remembering**. One finds difficulty in repenting of something for which he feels no guilt. The Ephesian Christians are asked to remember the lofty perch of the early development of the church when most and perhaps all of them had experienced the new birth, the release of the burden of the guilt of sin, and the elation of knowing that one is right with God. Those immediate postconversion days are, for the vast majority of new converts, days of service to the King motivated by gratitude and pure hearts of love. The Ephesians are to remember those days; and, **having assessed the difference between their present habitual pursuits versus the love-motivated pursuits of the early years, they are to repent**

And the warning that follows is stiff- **those who labor just out of duty and not out of passion, lose their churches.** (lampstand)

They may continue to meet. They may continue to labor. But they cease to be a church. They become a business. A club. A service organization. But they have no fire, no life, and they die as people age out (not for profits with aging workforce)

### **Revelation 1. To Ephesus (2:1–7)**

For the church in any era, this should give significant pause. Neither history nor appropriate activity is sufficient to demand the continued blessings of God; rather, the only motivation must be love for Christ. The threat for removal of the lampstand illustrates the justice, providence, and intention of God. **Neither God nor his kingdom is endangered by the removal of a church, even one as successful and strategic as Ephesus. Improper motivation for noble work can only precipitate judgment**

And as he concludes, John reminds them what is at stake- they have enemies...people who hate the Gospel. and those enemies are also people who Jesus died for, who God wants to save and make into friends...and they need to be the church to combat that- a church that loves Jesus.

**Revelation 1. To Ephesus (2:1-7)**

the Lord does not say that the church at Ephesus hates the Nicolaitans or, for that matter, that he hates the Nicolaitans. Specifically, “the practices” of the Nicolaitans merit that hatred. Here again is a lesson in every era for the church concerning her response to heresy. While the heresy and its practice must be despised, the heretic himself remains an object of God’s love and potential candidate for redemption. **In any era of the church of Christ, responding to heresy with hate for the heretic has not earned the blessings of God but rather his judgment.**

The question for us is the same as in verse 7- will we hear and respond?