

# KEEP THY HEART

A Bible-Based Devotional

Turn to: **Revelation 2:1-7**  
“When Love Grows Cold”

Jesus warned us in Matthew 24:12 about the end times: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Because we live in a culture that is becoming increasingly sinful and expressing sin more openly, we need to be more and more vigilant to protect *our* love from growing cold. Are we genuinely warm toward other people? Or have we allowed our wicked, dark culture to slowly drain our spiritual "core temperature" over time?

Today, we will look at a church that had to work on this very thing; yet it had a lot of really great attributes as well. If you walked in the door in this church at Ephesus, I believe you would hear solid doctrine, see a church body with a good work ethic, and notice an overall lack of spiritual wolves. The church took a stand on the correct side of a modern battle of that day. But I think something you would notice missing, especially as a visitor perhaps, is an overall lack of warmth and love. Sometimes, when we fight and contend for the faith and refuse to compromise, Satan attacks us at another angle by trying to take away our warmth and love, making us calloused. If you feel the chill of this culture draining you spiritually, as I often have, then let's learn four tips from this church on how we can keep our love for Jesus Christ and for others warm in cold surroundings.

**1: Remember your direct accountability to Jesus Christ (v1a).** I think that Jesus Christ **holds** the churches, not as a student holds a pencil, I think, but more as a jeweler holds a precious diamond, or as a craftsman firmly holds a valued tool. The **seven stars**, or angels, report directly to God, and the church is in His **right hand** of importance. In other words, we are directly held by, and accountable to, Jesus Christ. Do we sing, minister, or witness only to impress

others? Or do we remember that we are serving Jesus Christ (Colossians 3:23)?

**2: Remember the sweet presence of Jesus Christ (v1b).** Jesus also **walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks**; He visits our churches and walks with His saints (Genesis 5:22). Have you ever been in a church service that seemed extra-special, where the Spirit of God worked in an unusually powerful way? We visit our close friends more often than we do our acquaintances; and similarly, I think Jesus visits certain churches in a special way more often than others. Let us strive to be on good terms with Him so that He will be closer to us (James 4:8).

**(v2)** Jesus is very appreciative; He knows **our works**; that is, if He were looking at a building, He knows the dimensions and complexity of it all. He also knows **our labour**; He's not like a visitor who sees the building and says, "Okay, cool"; no, Jesus is like the experienced builder who would say, "Wow, *this over here* must have taken a lot of time to do," or, "I know installing *that* took a lot of work!" He measures not only length in inches, but sweat in ounces, knowing our blood and tears (Psalm 56:8). He knows not only that you witnessed to that person, but also the trembling with which you did it. But He also knows **our patience**, or the long-term drain and temptations to give up, like Nehemiah (Nehemiah 4:10; Galatians 6:9).

He also sees those who **cannot bear them which are evil**. Frankly, this is a virtue which is all but ignored today, even vilified; yet Jesus praised it. To love God means to hate sin (Psalm 15:4). Yes, Jesus ate with sinners, but He did not tell dirty jokes or laugh at them to fit in, nor did He compromise in any way (II Corinthians 6:14-18). We should put those **who say they are apostles on trial**—don't believe every teacher or preacher who claims to love Jesus (I John 4:1). I imagine that to **find them liars**, the Ephesians had to go through a long, draining process of confusing conversations (maybe you've had those sorts of conversations with unsaved people yourself). But the Ephesians were victorious in the end, and the verdict was clear that these were false prophets (cf. Deuteronomy 13:1-5).

(v3) Like a mule persevering under a heavy burden, they **bore** the labor and trials; through mud and rain they **had patience**; they even did it all **for Jesus' name's sake**, i.e., with good motives (interestingly, we can have good motives and *still* have cold love) and they were tough and did **not faint** (Galatians 6:9).

(v4) **Nevertheless**, Jesus is always perfectly honest, and our good never erases our bad. Jesus never exaggerates; He has "**somewhat**" against this church. They weren't on fire the same way they used to be for Jesus, and they had **left their first love**.

Have we left our first love? Do we value the *presence* of Jesus, or just the activities of the church, knowledge of the Bible, elegance of the buildings, or excitement of the social atmosphere?

**3: Remember your initial love for Jesus Christ (v5-6)**. We need to spend some time just to **Remember**. Look through the "photo album" of your spiritual life from time to time; let that lump form in your throat; and determine to never let the fire that you have for Jesus wane. We must measure **from where we have fallen** (cf. Jeremiah 6:16), taking *absolute* measurements; otherwise we'll just slowly drift further and further away without realizing it (II Corinthians 10:12). For a church, the saddest thing that can happen is for Jesus to **remove their candlestick out of his place**; I think this means the Spirit departs from that church, and it is effectively dead, no matter how many members it has. That would be so very sad.

(v6) Jesus ends on a positive note; they took a stand against the **Nicolaitans**, which we don't hear about anymore today, but they must have been quite the troublemakers back then. And Jesus commends them for **hating what He also hates** (Psalm 101:3); are we like that? Do we hate sin? Do we hate bars, homosexuality, atheism, adultery, divorce, theft, and lying? And do we take strong stands on modern battlegrounds, or do we ignore them? The Ephesians are commended for *not* ignoring this raging first-century battle against the Nicolaitans. Let us not ignore the battles of our day; but rather, let's call out the sins of worldly entertainment, homosexuality,

transgenderism, immodesty, and moral decline. Let us never be ashamed of the simple and powerful words of the Bible.

**4: Remember the reward of Jesus Christ (v7)**. It's fun to think about our heavenly reward sometimes. First, Jesus will be the One Who **will give to eat**—He will personally be our Waiter and Chef! Of course, He doesn't do it out of duty, since *we* should be serving *Him*. Yet I think He is so excited to do this out of love (Luke 12:37). The fruit and leaves from **the tree of life** will be incredibly refreshing and healing to battle-worn saints (cf. Revelation 22:2); yet this tree is just a teaser for paradise, as it's **in the midst**; i.e., there's *much* more that we don't know. But heaven is **the paradise of God**; imagine a new, perfect Eden; imagine the most beautiful scene you've ever experienced. Yet heaven will be so much more grand, beautiful, and pure.

If we need some spiritual revitalization, perhaps we should take some more time to think about the rewards that await Christians in heaven. I think that sometimes, people feel that it's selfish to think about the streets of gold, the tree of life, no more pain, etc.—but really, God gave us teasers of heaven for a reason (cf. Malachi 3:14). I think they should motivate us to love God even more, serve Him with renewed zeal, purify ourselves (I John 3:3), and realize that our lives on earth are fleeting when compared to being with Jesus forever. And Jesus really does love us! He wants us to be excited about what He's preparing for those of us who love Him (John 14:2-3).

A good thermos can keep water hot for quite a long time; but it will cool eventually unless it is reheated. Do we stay close to the fire of God's Word and Holy Spirit to continually "recharge" our love for Him? Or have we drifted away from Him? Or worse still, have we "removed the lid" of the thermos, letting the coldness and sinfulness of this world directly into our hearts through what we enjoy or find entertaining? Let's get back to a fervent love for Jesus Christ, and then let's be vigilant to keep it recharged and hot.