



Be  
Still.

# THE KEY TO REVIVAL

BY C. H. SPURGEON • PART ONE

*Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent (Revelation 2:4-5).*

**I**t was the work of the priest to go into the holy place and to trim the seven-branched lamp of gold: see how our High Priest walks in the middle of the seven golden candlesticks: his work is not occasional, but constant. Wearing robes which are at once royal and priestly, he is seen lighting the holy lamps, pouring in the sacred oil, and removing impurities which would dim the light.

## THE CONSTANT WORKER

Hence our Lord's fitness to deal with the churches which are the golden lampstands, for no one knows so much about the lamps as the person whose constant work it is to watch them and trim them. No one knows the churches as Jesus does, for the care of all the churches daily comes on him, he continually walks among them, and holds their ministers as stars in his right hand. His eyes are perpetually on the churches, so that he knows their deeds, their sufferings, and their sins; and those eyes are like a flame of fire, so that he sees with penetration, discernment, and accuracy which nobody else can reach. We sometimes judge the condition of religion too leniently, or else we err on the

## THOUGHTS AND READINGS FOR MEDITATION



other side and judge too severely. Our eyes are dim with the world's smoke; but his eyes are like a flame of fire. He sees the churches through and through, and knows their true condition much better than they know themselves. The Lord Jesus Christ is a most careful observer of churches and individuals; nothing is hidden from his observant eye.

## THE CAREFUL OBSERVER

As he is the most careful observer, so he is the most candid. He is always 'the faithful and true witness'. He loves much, and therefore he never judges harshly. He loves much, and therefore he always judges jealously. Jealousy is the sure attendant of such love as his. He will neither speak smooth words nor bitter words; but he will speak the truth—the truth in love, the truth as he himself perceives it, and as he would have us perceive it. Well may he say, 'He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches,' since his sayings are so true, so just, so weighty.

## THE TENDER OBSERVER

Certainly no observer can be so tender as the Son of God. **Those lamps are very precious to him: it cost him his life to light them.** 'Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it.' Every church is to our Lord a more sublime thing than a constellation in the heavens: as he is precious to his saints, so are they precious to him. He cares little about empires, kingdoms, or republics; but his heart is set

*"Something extraordinary happens to a man who holds  
onto the love of God in the face of tribulation."*

**"WHO SHALL SEPARATE US  
FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST?"  
ROM 8:35**

on the kingdom of righteousness, of which his cross is the royal standard. He must reign until his foes are vanquished, and this is the great thought on his mind here: 'from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool'. He never ceases to watch over his church: his sacrifice has ended, but not his service in caring for the golden lamps. He has completed the redemption of his bride, but he continues her preservation.

Therefore, I feel at this time that we may well join in a prayer to our Lord Jesus to come into our midst and put our light in order. Oh for a visit from himself such as he paid in vision to the seven churches of Asia! With him is the oil to feed the living flame, and he knows how to pour in the correct measure. With him are those golden snuffers with which to remove every 'superfluity of naughtiness', that our lights may so shine before men that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father who is in heaven. Oh for his presence now, to search us and to sanctify us; to make us shine forth to his Father's praise. We would be judged by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. We would pray this morning, 'Search my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.' All things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do; **and we delight to have it so.** We invite thee, O great High Priest, to come into this thy sanctuary, and look to this thy lamp this morning.

In the test, as it is addressed to the church at Ephesus and to us, we note three things. First, we note that **Christ perceives**: 'I know thy works . . . nevertheless I have somewhat against thee.' Secondly, **Christ prescribes**: 'Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent.' Thirdly, **Christ persuades**—persuades with a threatening: 'I will remove thy candlestick out of his place': persuades also, with a promise: 'To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.' If the Lord himself is here at this time, our plan of discourse will be a river of life; but if he is not among us by his Holy Spirit, it will be as the dry bed of a torrent which bears the name of 'river,' but lacks the living stream. We expect our Lord's presence; he will come to the lamps which his office calls on to trim; it has been his way to be with us; some of us have met him this morning already, and we have constrained him to tarry with us.

#### CHRIST PERCEIVES

Our Lord sorrowfully perceives the faults of his church—'Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee'; but he does not so look at these faults to miss what is admirable in the church. For he begins his letter with commendations. 'I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou cannot bear them which are evil.' Do not

think, my brethren, that our Beloved is blind to the beauties of his church. On the contrary, he delights to observe them. **He can see the beauties where she herself cannot see them.** Where we observe much to deplore, his loving eyes see much to admire. The graces which he himself creates he can always perceive. When we overlook them in the earnestness of self-examination, and write bitter things against ourselves, the Lord Jesus sees even in those bitter self-condemnations a life and earnestness and sincerity which he loves. Our Lord has a keen eye for all that is good. When he searches our hearts he never passes by the faintest longing, or desire, or faith, or love, of any of his people. He says, 'I know thy works'.

But while Jesus can see all that is good, yet in staying faithful he sees all that is evil. His love is not blind. He does not say, 'As many as I love I commend'; but, 'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.' It is more important for us that we should discover our fault than that we should dwell on our virtues. So notice in this text that Christ perceives the flaw in this church, even in the middle of her earnest service. The church at Ephesus was full of work. 'I know thy works and thy labour, and for my name's sake thou hast laboured, and hast not fainted.' It was such a hard-working church that it pushed on and on with diligent perseverance, and never seemed to flag in its divine mission. Oh that we could say as much about all our churches! I have lived to see many brilliant projects started and left half-finished. I have heard about schemes which were to illuminate the world, but not a spark remains. Holy perseverance is greatly to be desired. During these past thirty-three years we thank God that he has enabled us to labour and not to faint. There has been a continuance of everything attempted, and no drawing back from anything. 'This is the work, this is the labour,' to hold out even to the end.

Oh how I have dreaded lest we should have to give up any holy enterprise or cut short any gracious effort. Hitherto has the Lord helped us. With people and means, liberality and zeal, he has supplied us. In this case the angel (messenger) of the church has been very little of an angel from heaven, but very much a human angel; for in the weakness of my flesh and in the heaviness of my spirit I have pursued my calling; but I have pursued it. By God's help I continue to this day, and this church with equal footsteps is at my side; for which the whole praise is due to the Lord, who does not grow tired or become weary. Having put my hand to the plough I have not looked back, but have steadily pressed forward, making straight furrows; but it has been by the grace of God alone.

Alas! Under all the labouring the Lord Jesus perceived that the Ephesians had left their first love; and this was a very serious fault. So

it may be in this church; every wheel may continue to revolve, and the whole machinery of ministry may be kept going at its normal rate, and yet there may be great secret evil which Jesus perceives, and this may be marring everything.

But this church at Ephesus was not only hard working, it was patient in suffering and underwent great persecution. Christ says of it, 'I know your works and your patience, and how thou hast borne, and hast patience, and hast not fainted.' Persecution upon persecution visited the faithful, but they bore it all with holy courage and constancy, and continued still confessing their Lord. This was good, and the Lord highly approved it; but yet underneath it he saw the tokens of decline; they had left their first love. So there may seem to be all the patient endurance and dauntless courage that there should be, and yet as a fair apple may have a worm at its core, so may it be with the church when it looks best to the eye of friends.

The Ephesian church excelled in something else, namely, its discipline, its soundness in the faith, and faithfulness towards heretics; for the Lord says of it, 'How thou canst not bear them which are evil.' They would not tolerate false doctrine, they would not put up with unclean living. They fought against evil, not only in the common people, but in prominent individuals. 'Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.' They had dealt with the great ones; they had not flinched from the unmasking of falsehood. Those who seemed to be apostles they had dragged to the light and discovered to be deceivers.

This church was not honeycombed with doubt; it laid no claim to breadth of thought and liberality of view; it was honest to its Lord. He says of it, 'This thou hast, thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.' This was to their credit, as it showed a backbone of truth. I wish some of the churches of this age had a little of this holy decision about them; for nowadays, if a person is clever, he may preach the vilest lie that was ever vomited from the mouth of hell, and it will go down with some. He may assail every doctrine of the gospel, he may blaspheme the Holy Trinity, he may trample on the blood of the Son of God, and yet nothing is said about it if he is held in high esteem as a man of advanced thinking and liberal ideas. The church at Ephesus was not of this mind. She was strong in her convictions; she could not yield the faith, nor play the traitor to her Lord. For this her Lord commended her: and yet he says, 'I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.'

When love dies orthodox doctrine becomes a corpse, a powerless formalism. **Adhesion to the truth sours into bigotry when the sweetness and light of love to Jesus depart.**

Love Jesus, and then it is well to hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans; but mere hatred of evil will tend towards evil if love of Jesus is not there to sanctify it. I need not make a personal application; but what is spoken to Ephesus may be spoken at this hour to ourselves. 'I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.'

Thus I have shown you that Jesus sees the evil beneath all the good: he does not ignore the good, but he will not pass over the ill.

**This evil was a very serious one.** It was love in decline: 'thou hast left thy first love'. 'Is that serious?' asks someone. It is the most serious illness of all; for the church is the bride of Christ, and for a bride to fail in love is to fail in all things. It is idle for the wife to say that she is obedient, and so forth; if love for her husband has evaporated, her wifely duty cannot be fulfilled, she has lost the very life and soul of the marriage state. This is a most important matter, our love for Christ, because it touches **the very heart of the communion with him which is the crown and essence of our spiritual life.** As a church we must love Jesus, or else we have lost our reason for existence. A church has no reason for being a church when she has no love within her heart, or when that love grows cold. Almost any disease may be hopefully endured except the disease of the heart, which is full of danger; and it was so in this case. 'Thou hast left thy first love'. It is a disease of the heart, a central, fatal disease, unless the great Physician intervenes, and delivers us from it. Oh, in any man, in any woman, in any child of God here, let alone in the church as a whole, if there is a leaving of the first love, it is a woeful thing! Lord have mercy upon us: this should be our solemn litany at once. No peril can be greater than this. **Lose love, lose all.** Leave our first love, and we have left strength, and peace, and joy, and holiness.

I call your attention, however, to this point, that **it was Christ who found it out.** 'I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.' Jesus himself found it out! I do not know how it strikes you; but as I thought it over, this fact brought tears to my eyes. When I begin to stop loving Christ, or love him less than I should, I would like to find it out myself; and if I did so, there would soon be a cure for it. But for him to find it out, oh, it seems so hard, so sad a thing! That we should keep on growing colder and colder, and never care about it until the beloved points it out to us. Why even the angel of the church did not find it out; the minister did not know it; but he saw it who loves us so well, that he delights in our love, and pines when it begins to fail. To him we are unutterably dear; he loved us up out of the pit into his heart, loved us up from the dunghill among beggars to sit at his right hand upon his throne; and it is sorrowful that he should

have to complain about our cooling love while we are utterly indifferent to the matter. Does Jesus care more about our love than we do? He loves us better than we love ourselves. How good of him to care one jot about our love! **This is no complaint of an enemy, but of a dear wounded friend.**

I notice that Jesus found it out with great pain. I can hardly conceive a greater grief to him as the husband of his church than to look her in the face and say, 'Thou hast left thy first love.' What can she give him but love? Will she deny him this? A poor thing is the church left to herself: her Lord married her when she was a beggar; and if she does not give him love, what has she to give him? If she begins to be unfaithful in heart to him, what is she worth? Why, an unloving wife is a foul fountain of discomfort and dishonour to her husband. O beloved, shall it be so with thee? Will you grieve Emmanuel? Will you wound your Well-beloved? Church of God, will you grieve him whose heart was pierced for your redemption? Brother, sister, can you and I let Jesus find out that our love is departing, that we are ceasing to be zealous for his name? Can we wound him so? Is not this to crucify the Lord afresh? Might he not hold up his hands this morning with fresh blood on them, and say, 'These are the wounds which I received in the house of my friends. It was nothing that I died for them, but is it not terrible that, after having died for them, they have failed to give me their hearts?' **Jesus is not so sick of our sin as of our lukewarmness.** It is a sad business to my heart; I hope it will be sad to all whom it concerns, that our Lord should be the first to spy out our declines in love.

The Saviour, having thus seen this with pain, now points it out! As I read this passage over to myself, I noticed that the Saviour had nothing to say about the sins of the heathen among whom the Ephesians lived. They are alluded to because it must have been the heathen who persecuted the church, and caused it to endure, and exhibit patience. However, he does not say much more than a word about those who are evil. These had been thrown out, and he merely says: 'Thou canst not bear them which are evil'. He denounced no judgment upon the Nicolaitans, except that he hated them; and even the apostles who were found to be liars, the Master dismisses with that word. He leaves the ungodly in their own condemnation. But what has he to say against his own beloved? 'I have somewhat to say against thee'. **It seems as if the Master might pass over sin in a thousand others, but he cannot wink at failure of love in his own married one.** 'The Lord thy God is a jealous God'. The Saviour loves, so that his love is cruel as the grave against coldheartedness. He said of the church of Laodicea, 'I will spue thee out of my mouth.' This was one of his own

churches, too, and yet she made him sick with her lukewarmness. God grant that we may not be guilty of such a crime as that!

The Saviour pointed out the failure of love and called it by a lamentable name. 'Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen.' **He calls it a fall to leave our first love.** This church had not been licentious, gone over to false doctrines, become idle, nor been cowardly in the hour of persecution; but this one sin summed up the whole—she did not love Christ as she once loved him, and he calls this a fall. A fall indeed it is. 'Oh, I thought,' someone says, 'that if a member of the church gets drunk that would be a worse fall.' That is wrong. But it is a fall if we become intoxicated with the world and lose the freshness of our devotion to Jesus. It is a fall from a high estate of fellowship to the dust of worldliness. 'Thou art fallen.' The word sounds very harsh in my ears—no, not harsh, **for his love speaks it.** But it thunders deep down in my soul. I cannot bear it. It is so sadly true. 'Thou art fallen.' 'Remember from whence thou art fallen.' Indeed, O Lord, we have fallen when we have left our first love for thee.

The Master evidently counts this decline of love to be a personal wrong done to himself. 'I have somewhat against thee.' It is not an offence against the king, nor against the judge, but against the Lord Jesus as the husband of the church: an offence against the very heart of Christ himself. He does not say, 'Thy neighbour has something against thee, thy God has something against thee,' but 'I, I thy hope, thy joy, thy delight, thy Saviour, I have this against thee.' The word 'somewhat' is an intruder here. Our translators put it in italics, and well they might, for it is a bad word, since it seems to make a small thing of a very grave charge. The Lord has this against us, and it is no mere 'somewhat'. Come, brothers and sisters, if we have not broken any law, nor offended in any way in grieving another person, this is sorrow enough, if our love has grown in the least degree chill towards Christ; for we have done a terrible wrong to our best friend. This is the bitterness of our offence: Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, that I have left my first love. The Saviour tells us this most lovingly. I wish I knew how to speak as tenderly as he does; and yet I feel at this moment that I can and must be tender in this matter, for I am speaking about myself as much as about anybody else. I am grieving, grieving over some who are present this morning, grieving for all of us, but grieving most of all for myself, that our Wellbeloved should have reason to say, 'I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.'

So much for what **Christ perceives.** Holy Spirit, bless it to us!

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# CHRIST IS PURIFYING HIS BRIDE!

by DAVID KYLE FOSTER

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The parable about the ten virgins starts out: “At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.” At what time? Clearly, at the time of Christ’s second coming—the coming for the bride, the time of Revelation 19:7, of which God says, “Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready.”

Not everyone will be ready. The Bible is clear about that. Only five of the virgins had oil in their lamps when the Bridegroom came. Only five had prepared for His coming and were found developing a habit of life whereby they progressively lived by the Spirit rather than the desires of their sinful nature (ref. Gal 5:16). Only five had been dwelling in His presence on an ongoing basis, continually being filled with His life and power. It is this state of progressive intimacy with the Father that keeps our lamps full. “If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin.” (1 Jn 1:7)

You see, Jesus came to do more than just rescue us from eternal damnation. He came to transform us into His image—to make true sons and daughters out of us. Jesus Christ “gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good.” (Titus 2:14) The reason the Son of Man came was to destroy the works of the devil (1 Jn 3:8) and thereby set man free to live the life intended for him—a life of Christ-likeness.

The life that belies genuine faith in Christ is one that progressively evidences yieldedness and cooperation with the Spirit of God. In that sense, we are to “purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.” (2 Cor 7:1) The Bible indicates that we purify ourselves “by obeying the truth” (1 Pet 1:22), by preparing our minds for action, and not conforming ourselves any longer to our evil desires (vv 13-14). It says that we are made pure by our hope in the fact that God has poured out His love on us and called us His

children, being made into the likeness of His Son. (1 Jn 3:1-3) The removal of shame and condemnation brought about by Christ taking those things on Himself is what purifies us and enables us to walk in holiness, “eager to do what is good”. (Titus 2:14)

Many of us wallow in self-pity, casting ourselves as tragic victims of overpowering evil desire within and without. This is nothing but an attempt to justify a refusal to commit ourselves in love to Jesus Christ. We refuse to engage in the passionate love affair with our Saviour that is offered to us because we still love our sin more than we do Him.

**We love Him less because we doubt His goodness.** We are like children throwing temper tantrums—angry at God for some imagined slight or misdeed. We create this phantom image of God, rebel against it, and then refuse to enter into intimacy with Him so as to discover the perfect love that He has for us. We refuse because we cannot believe in unconditional grace, in not earning our right standing before God. And in the blindness of pride, we impose what we believe to be a higher standard for ourselves than what God has provided. *Satan is making fools out of us.*

In his book, *Grace Works*, Dudley Hall writes, “All of God’s commandments are promises. He will bring about the righteous life in that person who takes the time to get in His presence long enough, and often enough, to fall in love with Him. He will purify that one who hungers and thirsts after righteousness. He will do it, from start to finish.”

A tremendous summary of all that God promises to do for us (in type) can be found in Ezekiel 36:24-29a: “I will take you out of the nations, I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit in you and move you to follow My decrees and be careful to keep My laws. You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be My people, and I will be your God. I will save you from all your uncleanness.” All He needs is that heart that is fully committed to Him (2 Chron 16:9), that forsakes once and for all the idolatry of hoping in anyone or anything else but Him.

In the parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22:1-14, God has prepared what I believe to be the elaborate wedding banquet of a love relationship with His Son—both a future event and an ongoing feast that we are all invited to partake in by giving ourselves,

not just once, but always and forever, in committed love to our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Many who are invited make their excuses and turn down the invitation. Some say they are coming but never turn up. Others pay no attention. Finally the king says to His servants: “Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find . . . both good and bad.” The ones who come wearing the proper wedding clothes (the robe of righteousness given only to those who put their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour) receive the benefits of the kingdom. The parable concludes by reflecting on what has happened: “For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

One of Satan’s most subtle deceptions is to cause us to believe that mentally agreeing with the concept that Jesus Christ is Lord and Saviour is enough—that we can find salvation in a pseudo-faith that offers no commitment, one that is birthed in the mind rather than in the heart. It is a lie that western minds, which do not understand the total commitment implied by the Biblical concept of “faith”, often fall for.

Jesus, on the other hand, made it clear that if you truly are committed in love to Him, you will keep His commandments—i.e., what you say you believe will prove itself in a life that changes to bear fruit consistent with what you profess. The Apostle James makes the same point without equivocation.

Only that which is of faith, which is forged in a heart sincerely broken over its sin, that is transformed, purified and made compliant and yielded by passion for the God who took the penalty for sin on Himself, will enter into the kingdom of God. (1 Cor 6:9-11)

Do not let Satan fool you. “Just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do.” (1 Pet 1:15) “Press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of (you)—the prize for which God has called (you) heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:12b, 14b) When you fail Him, turn back to Him in love and repentance. His righteousness is a never-failing stream! (Amos 5:24).

**Don’t let your past hold you back.** This is the time of God’s invitation to “whosoever will come.” He is pouring out His power at unprecedented levels to not only save and heal, but to so radically transform lives that those who have been the most fallen and broken can become the strongest of all. “For many who are first will be last, and the last first.” (Mk 10:31)

Don’t compromise the promise of God to be made holy. Be filled with His love, and come to the wedding feast!

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*“The more holy a man is, the more humble, self-renouncing, self-abhorring, and the more sensitive to every sin he becomes, and the more closely he clings to Christ.”*

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