

Remember Christ's Jealousy: The Church at Ephesus

LHC: Message Fourteen (980524PM)

Week 14: Remember Christ's Jealousy

(Revelation 2:1–7 — The Church at Ephesus)

This week as we approach the end of days, you can find hope as you remember Christ's jealousy!

SUNDAY: The First-Century Church

*I write so that you may know **how you ought to conduct yourself** in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*

—1 Timothy 3:15, emphasis added

Jesus jealously longs for us to love Him supremely—like His faithful saints did in the early church! From the depths of the catacombs, by dim and flickering light, the upturned sea of faces sang praises to the Lamb that was slain. Above ground, just thirty feet over their heads, a chariot clattered along the Roman road heading to the Coliseum. Inside that magnificent structure, nearly 80,000 spectators already strained to get a good view. The preliminary activities of fighting beasts drew only partial approval from the crowd. Soon blood would be seen, and that was what they came to see. Human blood from helpless Christians herded into the red-stained sand always drew rapt attention. As gladiators jabbed the unarmed participants, rounded up from various raids on the fledgling church, hunger-crazed predators circled in their cages awaiting a meal of those being pushed into the pit. Then the trumpet sounded! The crowd roared as defenseless men, women, and children faced the attacking wave of claws, fangs, and roars. Soon it was over. Blood and some bones were all that remained. As the mesmerized crowds departed, they were eagerly anticipating yet another exhibition on the morrow.

The next attraction for the day was in the torch-lit gardens of the Forum. At dusk the emperor would raise tied-and-pitch-covered human torches on wooden poles—Christians being martyred. They suffered greatly as they were burned alive to light the path of the citizens of the persecuting empire!

As night mercifully fell, the worshipers who lived in the catacombs crept up the city storm sewers to risk their lives in search of bones from the arena's blood-soaked sands and body parts from the smoldering stakes. They reverently carried them down into the catacombs and buried them with tear-filled songs of praise to the God of Hope and Comfort who alone could give them courage to go on. This was life for the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ during the latter part of the first century in the Roman Empire.

What was it that made them behave so bravely in such trying times? They were godly saints who followed the narrow path, the cross of Jesus—"the Way" (John 14:6; Acts 24:14–15). In Acts 19:11–20, Luke described many extraordinary and miraculous

events with amazing conversions and life transformations. These saints believed the truth about God. Because they believed rightly, they behaved rightly.

Jesus would love for us to daily affirm that we love Him, and want to serve Him with their same depth of devotion! We thus need to cultivate and embrace the truths that made these early saints so faithful: they were assured that Christ had saved them; they lived each day like they belonged to Him; and they really believed that they were headed to heaven to live forever with Him. Those who embrace these truths will have powerful effectiveness in their lives, and that is what our jealous Lord wants to see in each of us.

My Prayer for You This Week: *Oh Lord, as we hear Your letter to the church at Ephesus, and listen to Your words to us, I pray that You would help us to have ears to hear. Help us to have spiritual understanding so that Your message might be personal and very practical. We want to love You as at the first all the way to the end. We want to hold You in first place in our lives. We pray that as we look through this letter, and as Your Spirit illumines us, that we will see those keys You have given us to loving You most and first, because You are a jealous God. You long for us to love You and not just to serve You. I pray that such love would be evident in our lives and in our church lest you remove our lampstand, and we are no longer effective for You. We thank You in the name of Jesus. Amen.*

MONDAY: Ephesus in the First Century

*Paul, having passed through the upper regions, **came to Ephesus**. And **finding some disciples** he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” So they said to him, “We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.” . . . They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had **laid hands on them**, the Holy Spirit came upon them. . . . Now the men were **about twelve in all**.*

—Acts 19:1–3, 5–7, emphasis added

Ephesus was second among the cities of the empire; only Rome exceeded her in wealth and power. If you were arriving in Ephesus, the center of Greek mythological worship, there was only one sight that would catch your eyes. It would not be the bustling harbor teeming with boats, nor the roads lined with the exotic spices and goods from the East. It would be the lustrous golden gleam of the Seventh Wonder of the Ancient World: the Temple of Diana (Artemis to the Greeks). It was the largest building of that period—four times the size of the Parthenon in Athens—the size of a city block, ten stories high, and covered with gold. Cities that wanted to be “rained on” with prosperity sent a gold-covered column for this temple.

Gross immorality existed in Ephesus due to the temple’s presence. All day long, in the confines of this magnificent golden palace, thousands of male and female prostitutes gave themselves in the sordid worship of the pagan fertility deities. At dusk, they would then go into the city to earn a living in the bustling atmosphere of travelers from both land and sea.

In the midst of all this debauchery, Jesus Christ had a church planted at Ephesus, one that was well-pleasing to God. In fact, they were honored by receiving the first of Christ's personal letters to His seven churches (Revelation 2:1–7). The church at Ephesus was the most important church in the de facto capital, the landing-place for a messenger from Patmos, and at the head of a circular road joining the seven cities in order.

Here is the best part of that city: Jesus was shining through the saints at Ephesus! The church at Ephesus was a vibrant church. Jesus Christ was preeminent: *Fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified* (Acts 19:17). It wasn't the denomination, the buildings, or the leaders that drew the attention of these saints—it was the presence of the Lord!

The Ephesian church was repentant: *Many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them* (Acts 19:18–19). The Ephesian Christians made public renunciation of their old lives because God's Word was prominent in their church: *So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed* (Acts 19:20).

The Ephesian saints were heirs to the greatest and longest days of Paul's earthly ministry—his three years at Ephesus (Acts 20:31). Having been privileged to see Paul in his finest hours of ministry, they became a dynamic church that was pleasing to the Lord.

You, too, can please God by making Christ and His Word pre-eminent, thereby renouncing your old life. To grow in the Lord, ask Him to give you spiritual understanding so that His message to the church at Ephesus might become personal and practical. And, above all, pray that He will empower you to love Him as much at the end of your life as you did when you were first saved!

TUESDAY: The Loyalty Christ Seeks

*“I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and **you have persevered** and have patience, **and have labored for My name's sake** and have not become weary. . . . But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.”*

—Revelation 2:2–3, 6 emphasis added

The Ephesian church was tremendously nurtured by Paul, Timothy, and John. Paul wrote 1 and 2 Timothy while Timothy was the pastor at Ephesus. Paul had sent him to that church and, as church history records, Timothy stayed until a mob brutally murdered him for his strong preaching against sin. After that, until the apostle John was taken prisoner by the emperor and banished to Patmos, he shepherded that great Ephesian church, which had become the largest in Asia Minor (about 5,000 saints!).

The saints in Ephesus were loyal to Christ's church, and this particular assembly had a tremendous history. Church history also indicates that Mary, the mother of our Lord, moved from Jerusalem with John, and later died there. This city had an honor no other knew: Ephesus was the only church that had two apostles, Paul and John, who

wrote them inspired letters—Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians and John’s writing down of Christ’s personal letter to this assembly.

A generation from its founding, the church and the Ephesian Christians were mature. Two generations from Pentecost, the church at Ephesus had perhaps the richest history of any church in the ancient world. They were loyal to God’s standards. Jesus approved their purity in the midst of a wicked culture.

In our own culture, just a generation ago people had to search to find anything that was off-color or pornographic. But today you have to work to not find that wickedness. Yet we are not that much different from the society in which the Ephesians lived. Ephesus was a city much like Las Vegas or Atlantic City, and when you entered it, they might as well have had a sign saying: WELCOME TO SIN CITY! What I want you to see is this: their purity in the midst of a wicked culture is the *reason* Jesus approved of the Ephesian church.

It is also notable that the saints at Ephesus were not followers of Nicolas—a deacon (Acts 6) who later became an apostate and led the church astray into immorality and wickedness. Instead, the Ephesians were doing what Christ wanted them to do: they were toiling to exhaustion, pouring themselves into the work for Christ. They refused to even eat with someone who was living in immorality and disobedience. When things got tough, they did not let go of Christ, they kept going. They had patience even in persecution, and there was plenty of it!

How can gross immorality, such as existed at Ephesus, be overcome? The Ephesian Christians learned how to be overcomers through Paul’s letter to them forty years earlier. Let’s look at the principles he taught so that we can apply them to our own lives.

Repent of your past: *We all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. . . . But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks (Ephesians 2:3; 5:3–4).*

Having renounced all connection with their old ways (Ephesians 5:12), they would not even talk about them, or remind others of what they used to do. (That principle is something to bear in mind when giving a “before and after” testimony of salvation.) A simple application is this: do not let your mouth go back to the old ways of telling or laughing at off-color stories, double meanings, or the innuendo. Do not quote the TV shows. Instead, use your mouth to give thanks to God. Have you fully renounced your old ways and repented of your past?

Learn that your calling is different: *We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10).* Have you truly comprehended what a special calling God has given to you?

Learn the spiritual secret of putting off and putting on: *Put off . . . your former conduct [lifestyle], . . . be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and . . . put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:22–24).* In the streets of Ephesus, Christians were exposed daily to carved

symbols of various immoral deviations that were to be followed to the place where those lusts could be fulfilled. But they “put off” those lusts by the grace of God. Have you learned their spiritual secret of putting off the old habits and putting on the new in Christ? Are you being renewed by getting God’s Word deep within your heart?

Resist evil influences: *Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them* (Ephesians 5:11). Because the Temple of Diana was the most revered site in the ancient world to literally millions of worshipers, a custom had arisen that anyone, regardless of their status, was “free” within a 200-yard security zone. Thus, criminals came from far and wide to find a haven, and their presence only permeated the city with evil. Do you resist all evil influences?

Commit to truth and kindness: *Putting away lying, “Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor”. . . . Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you* (Ephesians 4:25, 32). Are you committed to honesty and kindness? Are you willing to humbly forgive—even when ill treated?

Release anger and pride to God: *Be angry, and do not sin . . . , nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor . . . that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good. . . . And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God. . . . Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice* (Ephesians 4:26–31). Have you released your anger and pride to God?

Jesus addresses His people with authority. He says, “I have the message—the eternal gospel. I am the One who holds the message in My right hand, and I walk in the midst of the church; I am examining what you are doing with it. I am looking at how you are living in light of the message you have received.” Are you, like the saints at Ephesus, loyal to God and His Word?

WEDNESDAY: The Love Christ Seeks

*“I have this against you, that **you have left your first love.**”*
—Revelation 2:4, emphasis added

“For over 40 years, since its founding,” writes John MacArthur, “this church had remained faithful to the Word and the Lord. Through difficulty and persecution, the members had endured, always driven by the right motive, i.e., for Christ’s name and reputation. . . . But the Ephesian’s passion and fervor for Christ had become cold, mechanical orthodoxy. Their doctrinal and moral purity, their undiminished zeal for the truth, and their disciplined service were no substitute for the love for Christ they had forsaken.”¹

Jesus therefore gave them an admonition in Revelation 2:4: “You have left (quit or forsaken) your first love.” In other words, it is not *what* you are doing; it is *why* you are doing it. You are not serving in this church for the right reasons, and that is not pleasing to Me. I am pleased that you are saved and living a pure life, but you are not pleasing to Me when you are motivated by yourself and not by pure love for Me.”

When life is only orthodox, routine, smoothly running, and the inner springs of life are running dry, that is not the spiritual life that God intends for you. The abundant life that Jesus offers is one filled with His love that conquers, captures, and crowns every part of your life. It is 1 Corinthians 13 love that can only be described, because it is so impossible to define. John spoke much of love and Christ (twenty-nine times in the synoptic gospels; forty-five times in John; fifty-one times in the epistles). Christ is present with you right now, and waiting for you!

What is First Love?

- **First love prompts us to patience**—like the love experienced by Jacob. Laboring and waiting seven years for his bride, Rachel, “*seemed only a few days to him*” (Genesis 29:20). Yet for some in today’s church, praying for just seven *minutes* seems like an eternity.
- **First love prompts us to worship**—like David’s love that overflowed from the shepherd boy’s heart into worshipful psalms. He never complained about having to sit out in the weather watching the sheep while his seven older brothers got to stay home. Instead, he loved his Savior so much that he saw Him in the mighty power of the wind and thunder, the brooks, the animals, and the stars. David worshiped the Lord wherever he was (Psalm 19).
- **First love prompts us to give our treasures**—like Mary of Bethany who broke the alabaster box of ointment and poured it out for Christ (Matthew 26:7). She could have kept her treasure, but she lavished it on the Lord! A martyred saint, Jim Elliot, once said, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”
- **First love prompts us to thanksgiving**—like the woman who wept at Christ’s feet, washed them with her tears, and wiped them with her hair (Luke 7:37). First love loves much, for much has been forgiven.
- **First love prompts us to sit at Jesus’ feet and just love Him**— like Mary of Bethany when she worshiped at Christ’s feet while Martha was busy about the house serving. Martha failed to perceive that her most important priority was to *adore* Christ, not serve Him. (See Luke 10:38–41.)
- **First love prompts us to love His coming**—like Paul who longed for Christ’s return! Yet he faithfully did what Christ wanted him to accomplish (Philippians 1:21–26).
- **First love prompts us to love His Word**—like the Berean Christians demonstrated by their insatiable desire to read and know God’s Word (Acts 17:11). They also understood the importance of having a passion to be with God’s people when they met.

How is your spiritual temperature today? Has your passion for Christ cooled, and are you now laboring without love? Has your spiritual life become so mechanical that the inner springs have run dry? Do you have a love that conquers, captures, and crowns every part of your life? Is your love like that in 1 Corinthians 13 that can only be described because it is so impossible to define? Giving Christ the love and attention He

desires is not only possible, but it is also essential if you are to avoid grieving His Holy Spirit!

THURSDAY: The Worship Christ Seeks

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon [material possessions].”

—Matthew 6:24, emphasis added

The church at Ephesus had been loyal to God and His Word in spite of being surrounded by strong materialism in their city. Because of the nearly universal worship of Diana, no one would dare to rob her; thus, behind the altar was the World Bank. One might say that Ephesus was the New York City of the ancient world. Perhaps the evil influence of this materialistic environment may have gradually weakened the first love of some of the Ephesian Christians. For lusting after money and possessions is certain to cool a believer’s love for Christ.

How did the devoted Christians at Ephesus resist Satan’s stronghold of materialism? As Paul said in Colossians 3, they set their affections on things above, not on things on the earth. As specific biblical principles were followed, they broke free of the lust for money and possessions. These same principles apply to us today as well.

Live for your new inheritance reserved in heaven: *In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will* (Ephesians 1:11).

Rejoice in your secure inheritance: [The Holy Spirit] *is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory* (Ephesians 1:14). God is safeguarding our inheritance! After the Resurrection, Jesus went back to prepare a place for us. In light of the fact that it took Jesus only six days to make the whole universe, the heavenly mansions He is preparing must be *spectacular* (John 14:2).

Rejoice in your magnificent inheritance: *The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints* (Ephesians 1:18). What Christ has in store for us is far greater than we could possibly ever imagine, for His riches are unsearchable (Ephesians 3:8)!

Rejoice that your wealth in Christ is more than can be counted: *In the ages to come He [will] show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus* (Ephesians 2:7). The only way to get victory over the lust of materialism is to rejoice wholeheartedly in Jesus himself—and the richness of what Christ has in store for you. *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”* (Matthew 6:21).

Our greatest treasure is to be *Jesus*—whom we are to worship with our whole heart, mind, and soul. In contrast, the full worship of Diana involved silver “letters” (the images made and sold there), which led to very alluring, sordid, and ecstatic worship. How did the Ephesian Christians keep from getting caught up in such false worship?

They saw that their access in Christ was instant and universal through prayer, and not localized to a pagan temple. They understood that true worship is spiritual: “*God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth*” (John 4:24; see also Ephesians 5:18–21). Diana’s temple fell into ruins, but Christ’s church can never be destroyed: *The whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord* (Ephesians 2:21).

Now then, what seems to be the root cause behind the Ephesians’ loss of their first love? Although materialism may have cooled the passion of some for Christ, I believe the root cause is that they stopped worshiping because they were so busy. Regardless of what competes for our affections to rob us of our first love—even service for Christ himself—we need to repent and return to the way things were at first with the Lord (Revelation 2:5).

Jesus says, “Worship *before* You serve Me! You can’t worship Me ‘in spirit and in truth’ if you have left your first love! And see to it that you maintain your passion to be with My people every time they meet!”

Do you have “an ear to hear” His voice speaking to you? I pray so!

FRIDAY: Beware of Jesus’ Jealousy

*“Do you not know that **friendship with the world is enmity with God?** Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”*

—James 4:4, emphasis added

In yesterday’s devotional, we saw that no one can serve two masters. In James, God strongly tells us that Jesus is so jealous of us that He does not want us to have friendship with the world. I am not talking about having friends that are unsaved, but loving the world system. In other words, Jesus does not want us to get involved in things that make us forget Him. He does not want the world to be on our minds all the time. He does not want us to be willing to sacrifice for it. He does not want the world, and all that is in it, to block Him out.

Before marriage, in order to have a relationship, you must be selective: you cannot have a relationship with just anyone—only one person. You aggressively pursue the one you love, and this is to continue on into marriage. Thus, God is saying, “You are married to Me, so you cannot be out dating anymore.”

Did you know that one of the prime characteristics of God is *jealousy*? We humans believe that jealousy is bad and, from a human standpoint, it indeed can be. But because God is perfect, His jealousy is also perfect. Exodus 20:5 says that *you shall not bow down to them nor serve them* [the gods of this world]. *For I . . . am a jealous God.* (See also Exodus 34:14 and Deuteronomy 4:24.)

God truly wants us to listen to Jesus (Matthew 22:37–38). We should therefore regularly examine our focus by asking these questions: *Who or what is my God? What is the center of my life? What do I rely on?*

Worldliness is not so much a matter of activity, but of attitude. A Christian can stay away from questionable amusements and places and still love the world, for

worldliness is a matter of the heart. Worldliness not only affects our response to the love of God, but also affects our response to the will of God: *If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him* (1 John 2:15; see also 2:17). Doing the will of God is a joy for those living in the love of God (John 15:14), but when a believer loses his or her enjoyment of the Father's love, it will be hard to obey His will. Combining those two factors leads to this practical definition of worldliness: **Worldliness is anything in a Christian's life that causes him to lose his enjoyment of the Father's love or his desire to do the Father's will.**

The extent to which we fail to respond to the Father's love (our personal devotional life), and fail to do the Father's will (our daily conduct), is the degree of worldliness that has entrapped us. Always remember: if we fraternize with the world, we become enemies with God.

At the end of an incredible life, the apostle John wrote some interesting words. He had met and followed Jesus as a very young man. After those climactic days of the Crucifixion, Resurrection, and birth of the church, John had outlived all the apostles. The very last thing that he wrote to us was this warning: *Little children, keep yourselves from idols* (1 John 5:21). We don't have Asheroths and Baals, but we do have plenty of modern-day idols that God has always condemned.

Our careers, jobs, occupations, or even today's technology can become idols. You might ask, "The Bible talks about that?" Yes, God is vitally interested in all that we fill our brief lives with as we journey heavenward: *They take up all of them with a hook, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their dragnet. Therefore they rejoice and are glad. Therefore they sacrifice to their net, and burn incense to their dragnet; because by them their share is sumptuous and their food plentiful* (Habakkuk 1:15–16).

That passage refers to worship of the occupation that brings work, the job that brings the income, the career that brings success, and the technology that brings pleasure. Worship is thinking about something or someone all the time. You shouldn't know the stock market, sports statistics, or the latest hit tune better than you know God's Word. Habakkuk 1:15 says that it is idolatry to sacrifice to our net. The net is just a tool, but we will lose our first love if we start worshiping that tool.

Our appetites and desires can become idols. Some people live to satiate themselves, like the rich fool of Luke 12:19 whose motto was to "*eat, drink, and be merry.*" Philippians 3:18–19 says that many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Therefore, their destiny is destruction; their god is their stomach (a reference to all physical desires, not just to food); and their glory is in their shame because their mind is on earthly things.

Money can become an idol. The book of Job, written sometime after the Flood, is the oldest book in the Bible. Job said that if he put his security in money (or even nature), instead of the Creator, he could not worship the Most High God: "*If I have . . . said to pure gold, 'You are my security,' if I have rejoiced over my great wealth . . . , if I have regarded the sun . . . or the moon . . . so that my heart was secretly enticed and my hand offered them a kiss of homage, then these also would be sins to be judged, for I would have been unfaithful to God on high*" (Job 31:24–28, NIV).

At the Transfiguration, *suddenly a voice came out of the cloud saying, “**This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!**”* (Matthew 17:5–6, emphasis added). Because God never changes, that command still stands. God the Father, who is a jealous God, expects us to heed whatever His Son says to us, and in James 4:4 Jesus has told us that *“Whoever . . . wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”* Whom do you worship? The modern idols of this world—or God? Remember: no man can serve two masters.

SATURDAY: Christ’s Offer of Victory

*Now thanks be to **God** who always **leads us in triumph** in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.*

—2 Corinthians 2:14, emphasis added

Not only did the church at Ephesus struggle with worldliness all around them, but they also had to be on constant alert to strong satanic influence. As Acts 19 records, there were many who used and followed occultist books and their witchcraft powers of Satan—just as is occurring more and more in our age. Maybe your weakness is not immorality or materialism; maybe you are spiritually sensitive and are oppressed by demonic powers. How do you handle that? The letter of Jesus to Ephesus (Revelation 2:1–7) is best understood when you read Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians.

How did the Ephesian saints resist strong Satanism? They saw that their victory was in Christ. We can learn much from these principles Paul taught about being an overcomer. First, know that **Jesus is above all others:** *He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named. . . . And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church* (Ephesians 1:20–22).

Next, acknowledge that **Satan was our old master:** *You once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience* (Ephesians 2:2). That was in the past; Satan and his demons do not have a hold on us anymore. We must destroy the things of the past so that they do not tempt us to fall back into sin.

Resist Satan: **don’t let Satan have a foothold.** Ephesians 4:27 tells us to not *“give place to the devil.”* Take a moment to look at the more than a dozen sins that surround that verse. Paul seems to imply that any of those sins left unattended can grow into a beachhead for the world, the flesh, and the devil to get a place to defeat us.

Finally, **don’t relax around Satan’s cronies:** *Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them* (Ephesians 5:11). Do not let Satan expose you to his trash through the pipeline of entertainment: TV, movies, inappropriate material on the Internet, music, the arts, and so forth. Do not let Satan’s lusts get into your mind. If you listen to music simply because it is beautiful, but its words are ungodly, then you are allowing Satan to fellowship with you. Reprove him instead; keep a guard on your ear gate, eye gate, and other senses.

Never forget: “*The thief [Satan] does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy,*” but Jesus came that you might have life—and “*have it more abundantly*” (John 10:10)!

Make a choice to live in hope: Jesus jealously longs for you to love Him supremely—like His faithful saints did in the early church. If you have left your *first* love, I exhort you to go back to where you departed. Repent; change your will. Simply tell Jesus: “I know that I have left that fervency, warmth, and longing for You. I’m starting to worship my ‘net’ and get my security in something other than You. Help me to repent, and remember where I came from. Help me to again do those works I did in the beginning for You.”

By His grace, choose to then repeat those things you did at the first, when you were so in love with your Lord. But be aware that when you got away from the Word of God, and stopped fellowshiping with His people, your heart grew cold, and it will seem hard to restore what you once had. However, if you daily get back into the Word and fellowship with the saints, your heart will soon warm up again. So Jesus lovingly says to you: “Come back to Me! I miss you!”

As a worshiper of the true God, you need to come into His presence alone as well as in a group. God wants you to gather together with other believers to magnify Him as His family. Although this will cost you time and resources, He will draw you so close that at times the things of earth will grow strangely dim. As you become very involved in such worship, you will receive joy unspeakable and full of glory!

A wonderful way to conclude this day’s devotional is to make the beautiful words of this old song a prayer of your heart.

Fairest Lord Jesus

*Fairest Lord Jesus, Ruler of all nature,
O Thou of God and man the Son;
Thee will I cherish, Thee will I honor,
Thou my soul’s glory, joy, and crown.*

*Fair are the meadows, Fairer still the woodlands,
Robed in the blooming garb of spring;
Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer,
Who makes the woeful heart to sing.*

*Fair is the sunshine, Fairer still the moonlight
And all the twinkling, starry host;
Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer
Than all the angels heavn’ can boast.*

*Beautiful Savior, Lord of all nations,
Son of God and Son of man!
Glory and honor, Praise, adoration,
Now and forevermore be Thine!*

—Anonymous German Hymn

¹ The MacArthur Study Bible, p. 1994.