

Loving Christ in Return

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[0:00] Let's take our Bibles and turn now to in this reading from God's Word.

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write, These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands.

I know your deeds and your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not and have found them false.

You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you. You have forsaken your first love.

Remember the height from which you have fallen. Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

[1:23] But you have this in your favor. You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

We are wanting to know what our God is like, and so we've come to God himself, to his word, where he explains to us what he is like.

We find him to be an awesome God, a God who knows everything, who is everywhere, who's all-powerful, who is sovereign, who is good, gracious, kind, a God of wrath, God of holiness, a God of love.

And we've been pausing on the fact that God is love. And we've seen something of the attributes of God's love. And we've come now to God's love applied.

What difference should it make that God has savingly loved me, a believer, in Jesus Christ? How should my life be different? Because he loves me.

[2:40] And we saw in the first place that we ought to be compelled by that love, that this love of Christ is compelling love, that it compels us to no longer live for ourselves, but for him who gave himself for us and died and rose again.

And then we saw that people who know the saving love of God in Christ meditate on his love. They think a lot about it. They rejoice in it. They sing about it.

They tell others about it. They give thanks for it. And last week, they rely on it. They lean hard on the love that God has for them.

And now this morning we notice that all the loved ones of the Savior return his love. They love him in return. It's perhaps one of the greatest demonstrations and proofs of the love of God in Christ that all across the world today are lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

They love him. And the only explanation for that is that he loved them first. It's his love that has made them lovers of himself.

[3:55] And so in Luke chapter 7, we find this woman who had a reputation all around the town for her sin. And she hears that Jesus is eating at a certain Pharisee's house and she takes a jar, alabaster jar of perfume, and comes to the place where he's eating.

And there he is reclining at the table and she comes up behind him over his feet and she's weeping. And her tears fall and wet his feet.

And then she wipes them with her hair and pours her perfume upon them and kisses them. And Jesus explains the whole scene to his host, the Pharisee.

He says, Would you know what's happening here? Her many sins have been forgiven for she loved much. You can tell she's received my forgiving love.

This woman has tasted my love. How? Because she loves me in return. She's been forgiven much. How can you know that? Because she loves much.

[5:12] Watch her. We love him because he first loved us. He loved us first. He loved us when we were enemies. He loved us when we were rebels, when we were going astray.

He died for us while we were yet sinners. And being so loved, we cannot help but love him in return. That's the property of his love. It compels us to love him in return.

So let's consider our love for Christ. Another application of his love for us is that we love him in return.

Turn to Revelation chapter 2 if you don't have your Bibles open there. and realize that what we have here is a letter from Jesus Christ to one of his churches.

You know, every day but Sunday there are letters that are dropped out here at the mailbox for Grace Fellowship Church. Most of it's junk mail. Yes, there's a lot of religious junk mail that comes to the church mailbox.

[6:17] But what if one day Pastor Aaron went out to the mailbox and he found a letter there to Grace Fellowship Church, Bremen, Indiana. And the return address was Jesus Christ from the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's what we have here in our text. Revelation 2, 1 to 7. We have the first of seven letters that Jesus sent to seven real churches to be dictated by John the Apostle.

And the Lord Jesus is the one seen in chapter 1 walking among the seven golden lampstands which are his churches. And walking among them, he's ever observing them.

He's ever watching them. Noticing both what is praiseworthy and what is reprobable. And being God, Jesus Christ sees what no one else can see.

He sees the hearts of people. He misses nothing. He knows us perfectly. And he tells each church what he sees. Now, though these were actual churches in existence toward the end of the first century, the messages of Christ to these churches is to be heard by all the churches.

[7:34] Even us. We find it in every letter. He says toward the end, He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches. So though the times have changed and things are different here and there, people are still the same.

Church problems are still the same. And so are the solutions. The lessons in these letters are timeless. So let us, Grace Fellowship Church, let us hear this letter from Christ to the churches. And hear what he's saying to us. And as we consider this first letter, we realize how important to Christ is our love for him.

That's what we learn. How important our love for him is to Christ. The church at Ephesus, what do we know about this church? Well, it had been founded through the labors of none other than the Apostle Paul.

They sat under his ministry for three years, you find in the book of Acts. Wow, wouldn't that be something to have the Apostle Paul as your pastor for three years.

[8:50] And they received a God-breathed letter from Paul to them, which we have in our Bibles called Ephesians. And they had elders trained under Paul who observed his way and manner of life and teaching and were now seeking to pastor the churches as he had told them.

And it's this church that had received the pastoral ministry of Timothy. As we're hearing on Sunday nights, those letters that Paul wrote to Timothy. Where is Timothy? He's in Ephesus. He's in this church.

And he's pastoring them. And this church had known such a ministry in their midst. And now, on top of all that, they now receive a letter from the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the church, dictated through the Apostle John.

What special favors then had been showered upon the church at Ephesus. And these divine favors had been put to good use. It's a church that has a lot going for it as we read the letter.

Christ sees much that pleases him. And he praises them for it. He says, I know your deeds. I know what you've been up to. I've been watching. And I know your hard work and your perseverance.

[10:05] I know that there are some things that you do because of my name that are just hard to do. And I've seen you sweating. And I've seen you going the extra mile.

And I've seen you persevering. You don't quit. You don't give up. You've persevered. You have endured hardships for my name and have not grown weary. It's an active church there at Ephesus. They're doing much for Christ. They were bearing witness for Christ in a hostile environment. The temple of Artemis was there.

And her image, which they all claim fell from heaven, it's there at Ephesus. And they just heaped superstitious honor upon her.

And anyone who challenged the reality of this goddess from heaven, why he was not welcomed in Ephesus. Remember the riot and greatest Artemis of the Ephesians, they chanted.

[11:08] And this is where this church is planted. And they're bearing witness for Christ. They're enduring persecution for Christ. And though they're persecuted, they're still persevering without growing weary.

The church at Ephesus. Furthermore, they refuse to compromise on doctrine or on morals. He says, I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you've tested those who claim to be apostles, but are not and have found them false.

You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate, says the Holy Jesus. No wicked men allowed in their membership.

No false teachers allowed to remain among them. They tried them. They held court and said, what they're teaching is erroneous. They're no true sent ones from Christ.

They paid a price for holding to sound doctrine in a day of doctrinal decline. They paid a price for holding to holiness in a day of moral laxity.

[12:15] Wow, this church is receiving due praise from the Lord Jesus Christ. And none of this had missed his eye. He saw it and he praised it.

And yet, he says, yet or nevertheless, there was something amiss that he could not help but notice. Verse 4, yet I hold this against you.

You have forsaken your first love. You have lost the intensity of the love that you had at first. Their love was cooling on a chart of where their love has been.

It once was here and now it's down here. You've lost it. You've forsaken it. You've neglected it.

You've turned away from your first love.

And this cut like a knife into the tender heart of the Savior and he takes it very personally. Notice he says, I hold this against you. This is a personal sin against me.

[13:17] This is something you've done to me. You have forsaken your first love. Now, what about me this morning? He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

What is he saying to this church? Grace Fellowship Church. What is he saying to every one of us here? May his word search us and try us and rebuke us and correct us as needed.

For we too, as a church, are one of the Lord's golden lampstands. We're one of his light bearers in the world. We're meant to shine brightly for him.

And the Lord Jesus walks among his lampstands. And he's right here. His Spirit, the Spirit of the Lord Jesus. He's right here with us this morning. He's observing.

He's watching everything that's done in his worship. He's listening to every doctrine that's being proclaimed in his name. He's watching our attitude toward a holy life. He's watching our works and witness as we go from this place into the world and live for him.

[14:22] And he's noticing it all. But he has a special eye upon our hearts. He's closely examining our love for him.

Is it growing or is it declining? Now some of you may say, well that's no big thing. I'm still regular in my church attendance. I'm still giving to the Lord.

I'm still here when the doors are open. I'm seeking to walk according to God's commands. I use my gifts.

I'm involved in Christian service and in bearing witness to the world but also in serving and caring for the people of God. Almost everything is in place in my religion.

But this is a big thing to Jesus. You can't read this letter without seeing the pain in our Savior's heart.

[15:23] Yet, I hold this against you. You have forsaken your first love. There's a mighty oak tree and it's stretching its branches as high as it is wide.

To all observers, it looks like a healthy tree. But inside, where you cannot see, the ants have been eating and hollowing out the very heart of that tree.

And the next strong spring wind that comes through will reveal to all what has always been the case that that tree was not as healthy as it looked. The situation is serious.

And it's very possible for a church to look very healthy, for a Christian to look very healthy and strong while the very heart of religion is being eaten out.

And what is the heart of religion? It is love for the Savior. The love for the Savior. And if that's gone, there's no health in that tree. There's no health in that church.

[16:29] That's what Jesus is saying. It's no small thing when the heart of religion is lacking. Love to Christ. It's a big thing. What's the greatest commandment someone asked him one day?

And he said, to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first and the greatest commandment.

Then to not love Him with all our heart is the greatest, the first and greatest sin. It's not a small thing to the Lord Jesus when we do not love Him with all our hearts.

Men, there's your wife, and she very dutifully puts three meals on the table for you every day, and she cleans your house, and she does your laundry. She takes care of the kids.

It's just that she no longer loves you. That's all. That's all. It's no big thing. It is a big thing to you. It's everything to you. And without that, nothing else that she does matters to you.

[17:39] You want her heart. You want her love. Love is at the very heart of your union. And you want that heart more than anything else.

So with the Savior, you know He's our bridegroom, and we're His beloved bride. The ones He loved and gave Himself up for, and He seeks above all things our love.

Give me your heart. That's what He says to us. Give me your heart. He knows if He has our heart, He has our service. He has our faithfulness.

He has our witness. He has everything else if He has our hearts. But if He doesn't have our hearts, He doesn't have anything. I have something against you. You've lost your first love.

And to slip from our first love is a serious thing to Jesus. To Peter, who denied three times that he ever knew Him. Jesus comes to him.

[18:36] What does He ask Him? Peter, do you trust Me? Peter, do you serve Me? Will you serve Me? Peter, no, it's Peter, do you love Me?

Because you've been acting like you don't. Do you love Me, Peter? Do you love Me? Three times He asks Him. This is the critical thing that Jesus looks for in His church, in His followers.

Do you love Me? And it's the critical thing about you, whoever you are this morning. It's the most important thing about do you love the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you forsaken your first love?

And He knows the answers to these questions because He's here and He sees. But He's confronting us with the state of our own hearts toward Him and He's demonstrating how much our love for Him means to Him.

He loves us with a love that seeks our love in return. That's a jealousy, isn't it? It's a jealous love that He has for us. He wants us to love Him alone.

[19:45] He alone should have the place of supremacy in our hearts. and I say, is that not amazing, brothers and sisters, that the Son of God should want the love of my poor heart so much so that He would complain to me when He doesn't have it.

The lover of your soul is anything but indifferent about your love for Him. He's constantly got the finger on your pulse. The pulse of your heart toward Him.

He's constantly got His finger there. Your love means that much to Him. I see what you're doing for me and I'm grateful for it, but John, I sense a coldness has come between you and me.

I sense an icy coldness where there used to be warmth. I sense a love for the world and the things that are in the world that has pulled affections away from me.

I've got something against you, John. You've forsaken your first love. Charles Spurgeon in a wonderful sermon, I commend it to you, I'm giving you much of it here this morning.

[21:00] A sermon called on this text called Love's Complaining. Love's Complaining. It says, How sad it is that the Lord Jesus should be the first to discover our declining love.

Oh, that we would discover it first and remedy it so that He might not have to feel such wound from His friend. But how sad that He would have to complain to us of our lack of love to Him, that we would keep on growing cold and cold and cold and never care about it till our beloved points it out to us.

You've forsaken your first love. He notices. He cares. He wants our hearts. Such is His love. Such is His love.

love. Well, let us recognize His complaint then as the complaint of a wounded friend. You no longer love me like you used to.

Let's not grieve Him with unrequited love. May the very complaint itself melt our hearts and inflame our love for Him. Love complaining.

[22 : 11] But then His complaint is followed by a command. Love commanding. As the great physician diagnosed the problem, well, he also has a remedy for it.

Here's the remedy in three parts. Remember, repent, and do the things you did at first. Remember the height from which you have fallen.

Notice, the first part of the remedy is an activity of the mind, isn't it? Remember, the very word for mind is part of that word. The mind is to be engaged in this restoration of the affections.

Are your emotions toward Christ running low? Are your affections low toward Him? God calls on, Christ calls on you to use your mind because it's through the mind that your heart will be inflamed. Remember. And remember the height from which you have fallen. Do you realize a lack of love is a fall? We talk about pastors who have fallen and we think, oh, no, what happened?

[23 : 19] What happened? Jesus says it's a fall when we forsake our first love. We've fallen. Treated as such.

Down there is no place to stay. Get up, he's saying. Remember. And you'll never realize the seriousness of your fall unless you remember the height from which you've fallen. So put on your thinking cap and think how it used to be.

Think how high your love once was for the Savior. That's where we begin in this process of renewing our heart's love for Christ. Compare the love you had for Him at the start with your present level of love.

remember how you used to enjoy thinking about the Lord Jesus. Remember those first days? You couldn't get over the fact that He had forgiven you all your sins. You'd never be brought into judgment for all your sins.

They were wiped out. You couldn't get over His love for you and you thought about it and you thought of Him over and over. You remember how you used to enjoy hearing about Him. You loved the days of worship.

[24 : 25] Oh, you loved the days when you could set aside everything and come and feast on His love for you as found in the Scriptures. Remember. Remember how you used to devour His Word. Just you and Him and Him speaking His love letters to you and then you pouring out your love in return in prayer.

Remember the warmth of your prayers. Remember how you memorized His words and meditated on them. Remember how you longed to please Him even if it meant denying yourself.

When you found something in Scripture or something in your life that displeased the Lord it must cease was your response. Whatever it cost I must please my lover the lover of my soul.

And whenever you saw something of duty or commandment you said that's what I must do and you delighted to change your life to please Him. Remember. Remember how you used to speak up for Him.

Remember how you were unashamed of Him. You were glad to identify I'm a follower of Jesus Christ. And His love was so sweet to you you wanted to tell others about it. Remember.

[25 : 37] Remember your first love. Because Jesus does. Jesus does. He says to His church in Jeremiah 2 in verse 2 I remember the devotion of your youth.

How as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert through a land and not sown. I remember the passion with which you once loved me.

The intensity of your affection for me. I remember how you were willing to follow me anywhere just to be with me was enough for you.

I remember you used to find your joy in just being with me. But now I see you go elsewhere to find your joy. into that entertainment into that person and it's no longer me that you find joy.

You once enjoyed all things because of me. And you enjoyed them as you enjoyed me the giver but now you enjoy them separate from me.

[26 : 41] Remember the height from which you have fallen. And as you remember how you once loved your Savior you'll see just what a fall it is. Where are you this morning in relation to that first love?

And then secondly repent. Once you see what you've fallen from repent. Now repent is something you do for sin and that means we must see lack of love to Christ is a sin.

It's a sinful fall to be repented of. Oh we we go through the Ten Commandments and we we say yes that's sin that's sin that's sin to do that to not do that but my friends Jesus summarizes them all and says this is what the summary of the law is it's to love God with all your heart so repent repent it's a wrong done to the lover of our souls I've sinned against him I've sinned against this love of his by not returning it as I should does he not have good reason to expect love from us does he not have good reason to expect that our love would not wane but that it should grow and increase has he not done enough to win your heart dear believer does he not deserve to have you love him with first love intensity has he changed since the time of your conversion has he become less lovely less kind less gracious oh then why have you forsaken your first love for me he asks repent the reality is that every day since my conversion

I have more reasons not less to love him and so I need to repent of loving him less repentance starts with confession of sin and so we own it for the wicked thing it is we have not loved thee as we ought nor care that we are loved by thee by presence we have coldly sought and feebly long thy face to see Lord give a pure and loving heart to feel and own the love thou art so we start by owning our sin we just tell him what he already sees a cold heart perhaps and then we go further because repenting is not just confessing is it it's a change of mind that's followed by a change of behavior and life it's to repent is to turn around I've fallen I've gone down and to repent is to turn around and to climb up again to turn from our sins and if we're honest with ourselves we'll see that lack of love for Christ is due to giving love given to other things and other persons that I've somehow and somewhere in my life exchanged them for him and we're all the time making these exchanges and so I must repent of those exchanges what I've put in his place someone something has received the affection that he alone deserves and so repentance means the knife of mortification cutting off that which has been siphoning off my love to

Jesus maybe it's some sin and your your affections have been siphoned from Christ to that sin cut it off repent maybe it's something that's good in and of itself but you have let it grow to an idol to where it means too much to you and you get all excited about that thing such to the place that your love for Christ is waning I ask you how can you I ask you this because I feel it in my heart how can we watch four hours of television at night and then open up our Bibles for five minutes and wonder why my heart does not love Jesus more I've got to get the knife out what is stealing my love for Jesus whatever it be repent repent where your treasure is there will your heart be where's your treasure so it's the first savings bank here in town that means you make a lot of deposits into that bank don't you every week every month you're depositing into that bank and it's the same way with our treasure where's your treasure at because that's where your heart will be what are you depositing into

[31 : 38] Christ what time are you spending with him what what are you doing with you and your savior you're depositing much into that bank that's where your heart will be where your treasure is is where your heart will be or are you making deposits constantly in the world and the things that are in the world to the neglect of the Lord Jesus Christ himself I have something against you you have forsaken your first love remember repent and lastly do the things you did at first as I put to death the things that I have replaced Christ with I've got to put him in place it's not just put off it's put on I've got to draw near to Christ again I've got to give myself afresh to all those things that I did at the beginning when I enjoyed him so much so I do the first things I commit myself afresh to all those means of grace where

I met with him I used to meet with him so faithfully in his word and in prayer and meditation and memorization and worship and fellowship and there I met Christ and there my heart was stoked with love so I commit myself again to the first works I don't wait and say well as soon as my heart feels love for Jesus I'll read the Bible as soon as my heart feels love for Jesus I'll pray if I wake up Sunday morning and feel like I love Jesus I'll come worship no we repent and do the first works and Christ is pleased to meet us in the way to meet us in the way of!

to stir up and to stoke up our love into a flame remember repent and do the things you did at first love commanding love commanding and then lastly we have love motivating so intense is Jesus love for us so intense is his desire to have us love him in return that he gives us a warning and a promise to prod us back to our first love a warning and a promise the warning the last part of verse five if you do not repent of what of your cooling love forsaking your first love if you do not repent I will come to you and remove your lamp stand from its place friends we little know where our declining love will end just just how cold will your heart get you don't know

I don't know that and Jesus is warning us not to just be haphazard about this to take it seriously he said to that group in Matthew 24 verse 12 because of the increase of wickedness the love of most will grow cold but he who endures to the end will be saved are you going to be one of those that the love of the most will grow cold are you going to be one of those who endure to the end well if you see any declension in your love don't don't wait repent now remember now do the first works now there's a warning here take very seriously anything that chills our hearts love for Jesus because if you do not repent I'll come to you and remove your lampstand from its place do it now do it now repent now get back your first love now Jesus says concerning his churches where there's no love for me there'll be no light for me

I'll extinguish the lampstand I'll remove the lampstand from its place your church cannot go on as a beacon of light when there's no love for me your very usefulness indeed the very existence of the church depends upon love for Christ a grieved savior will withdraw his light well what happened in Ephesus it's interesting to see what Timothy was to do there and the instructions he was given and to wonder how did they take God's word to them how did they take Jesus letter to them did they repent what do we know of Ephesus and the church there today we know that the town doesn't exist anymore the church doesn't exist anymore it's ruins over there in

[36 : 31] Ismar where Octave goes tomorrow to plant a church repent because if you don't I will come to you and will remove your lampstand from its place the lampstand was removed from Ephesus two weeks from today we're going to be celebrating together our 25th anniversary as a church looking back upon God's faithfulness to us for 25 years this would be a good message for us to consider wouldn't it to consider one of the letters of Christ to the church and to ask ourselves we've sought to be truthful to the doctrines of grace we've sought Lord but oh if we have neglected love for Jesus what do we have remember repent do the first things or I will remove my light from among you the greater your love for

Jesus as a church the greater your light will be so the warning shows us Jesus intensity how important this is to him let us heed the importance the warning of it and repent now today on the spot and then the warning is followed by a promise he's prodding us you see to him who overcomes I will give the right to eat from the tree of life which is in the paradise of God to him who overcomes it's not just the church thing it's an individual thing yes it's true of the church at Ephesus but now he's speaking in the singing to him to the one who overcomes I will give the right to eat from the tree of life now Jesus is putting me on notice here that it's going to take some overcoming to regain lost love to Jesus it's going to take some overcoming some conquering if you're going to maintain first love fervency for

Christ you're going to fight for it that's what I see in that word to him who overcomes there's a laziness to conquer in maintaining first love for Christ it's going to have to be overcome there's an unbelief to conquer there are idols to tear down there are other lovers to dismantle and cast to the ground and we must be ruthless in dealing with all these love quenchers in our hearts and lives you must overcome there's the world the flesh!

the devil all to be overcome! the world! not helping! you love Jesus is it you know what it's doing to me it's alluring me and it's holding out everything to draw my love away from Jesus it's got to be overcome if I'm to love Jesus with first love intensity because of the increase of wickedness the love of most will grow cold and we're seeing the wickedness of this world and the love of most is growing cold but we must!

to stay in love with Jesus in this world it's an uphill swim to love Jesus in the world that crucified him and then there's your flesh that anti-God part of you that anti-Christ part of you that's still there in you doesn't matter how long you've been a Christian it's still there and it would rather watch TV than to pray that flesh has got to be overcome if I'm going to love Jesus and there's the devil who knows the precise bait to dangle in front of me and in front of you to him who overcomes all that would drench this love for Christ what's the promise I will give the right to eat from the tree of life which is in remember that tree there it was there were two trees the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life and once they sinned

[40 : 51] Adam and Eve were chased out of the garden and the flaming cherubim were put there to not let them to get back in lest they eat of the tree of life and live forever now what do we have we have a promise made out by Jesus Christ the second Adam who has succeeded to obey his father where the first Adam failed and now through him we are actually promised that we can come into paradise and eat of the tree of life it's the promise of eternal life to him who overcomes eternal life

but will you see brethren that this matter of loving Jesus is a matter of death and life to him who overcomes eternal life to him who loves Jesus eternal life to him who does not love Jesus eternal death and damnation so Paul when he concludes his letter to the

Corinthians he says if anyone does not love the Lord a curse beyond him you see it's a serious matter to not love Jesus but what a promise whoever overcomes the obstacles and loves Jesus to the end eternal life right to eat yours won by the Lord Jesus for you how will I know that it's mine you go on loving!

Jesus he means more to than anything else there's going to be a lot of surprises when we get to heaven both in who is there and who's not there the glory of Christ that will surprise every one of us the happiness of the place the half has never been told we'll be surprised but J.C.

Ryle the English minister of the 1800s says of all the things that will surprise us this I believe will surprise us most that we did not love Christ more than we did before we died that we did not love Christ more before we died indeed is that not perplexing to us now that we love him no more than we do when we see all that he has done for us because of his love for us we see him leaving heaven's glories taking our flesh and blood upon himself forever and ever he will now be the God man with our flesh so great his love for me kind Jesus was thine incarnation and we see him going to the cross and we see him laying down his life for love and we see the wrath of God that was ours being swallowed up by him so great his love and we see all of our sins forgiven because he takes the punishment that we deserve for them and we say dear

Lord and shall we ever live at this poor dying rate our love to thee so small and thine to us so great is that your heart this morning tell it to Jesus tell him it's not right it's the greatest crime in the world that I don't love you more that you have so loved me that I don't love you more oh Lord Jesus come and kindle this heart with love for yourself what's the answer to the cold heart here it is remember repent and do the first works but in short it's get near his heart that's what all the first works are about getting near his heart kids you're outside playing on a cool spring night and dad comes out and lights a fire and as you're playing around the yard you're starting to get cold what do do you come and warm yourself near your father's fire and I don't know any better word than to leave you with what do you do

[45 : 15] Christian when you realize that your heart is getting cold and there's an icy coldness that is just settled in your heart what do you do well you bring that cold heart near to God's heart you bring the cold heart that you have and you bring it up close to Jesus Christ's heart his love for you that's where your heart was inflamed in love the first time wasn't it at the start you loved him because he first loved you get back there get back to him fight through whatever distractions there are be an overcomer but get near the heart of Jesus that his love for you might again inflame your love for him William Featherstone lived in Montreal Canada in the mid 1800s when he was 16 years old he repented of his sins and trusted in the

Lord Jesus Christ soon after his conversion he wrote a hymn in which he expressed his love to Jesus I love thee because thou hast first loved me and purchased my pardon on Calvary's tree I love thee for wearing the thorns on thy brow if ever I love thee my Jesus tis now teenage boy expressing his love to a savior can you remember when you were first converted and how you said if ever I love thee my Jesus tis now he only lived till he was 26 and then he went to see him whom having not seen he loved I'll love thee in life I'll love thee in death and praise thee as long as thou lend us me breath and say when the death dew lies cold on my brow if ever

I love thee my Jesus tis now our Lord Jesus we do address you as a present savior who walks among your churches and observes not only our actions but our hearts and we confess to you Lord what you already see and know that they are not what they ought to be and we humbly ask that you forgive us of hearts that have sought their joys elsewhere ask that you be merciful to us even as you have every day of our Christian life oh it's just another expression of that wonderful love and we thank you for the grace and mercy of it Lord Jesus you're able to keep our hearts from strain oh keep us clear clear from idols there's everything in you to fascinate our hearts and to cause us to adore and marvel at you help us

Lord Holy Spirit come and shed abroad in our hearts this love of God for us we might see it more clearly might grasp it more deeply and so be transformed in loving you bring love this morning for the first time we've spoken of first love Lord may first love be planted in some heart here this morning and revived in each of our hearts wherever we're at come and thank you again for that love that is better than life we pray in Jesus name amen