

**REVELATION (GOD'S MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH)
PROGRAM 8 (#911243)
WEEK 2 (911349)
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P.O. Box 182218, Chattanooga, TN 37422-7218
1-888-734-7707/ www.preceptsforlife.com

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SERIES: Revelation (God's Message To The Church)

TITLE: Program 8 – Loving Him First!

WEDNESDAY

OPEN

When you're talking to a woman my age, you know that there was difference between the love songs of yesterday and the love songs of today. Yesterday was more of a romance. Today it's more of what you can do for me and how you make me feel. When I think about that I think about what are we singing to Jesus? What is our love for Jesus like? Is it a love towards Him or a love that only wants to get. We'll talk about it today as we look at Revelation.

PART ONE

Okay, I bet I can guess what you're thinking or what you're wondering. You're wondering, she said a woman of my age; how old is she? Well so you won't set there trying to figure out how old I am, let me just say this: In 10 years I will be 80 years old. Now that's physically, that's chronologically, but it sure isn't the way I feel. Now let's go on to the book of Revelation.

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Let's go back to the church at Ephesus; the message that Jesus has for the church at Ephesus as He walks among the candlesticks. We've looked at the description of Jesus. We've seen Him walking among the candlesticks. We see Him holding in His right hand the seven stars, which are the seven messengers or the seven angels of God, that are delivering these messages for Him to the churches. We have seen the commendation. He knows their deeds; He knows their toil; He knows their perseverance; He knows that they're checking out and that they can't tolerate evil men and they are not going to have anything to do with false apostles. He knows that they have many things to commend themselves to Him, things that He is very proud of. But what happens is in verse 4, He says, "This I have against you" What does He have against them? How is He going to reprove them? Well if you caught the last program you know. Or if you've been studying along with us in your study guide then you know. He says, "This I have against you that you have left your first love." There was an ardor. There was a passion. There was a dedication. There was a consecration. There was a love that said hey, nothing is too much God. Nothing is too much; I love You. I love You. And all I want to do is please You. And you've left that passion and you've gotten into this settled, kind of Christian life. "... a life, He says, of perseverance, a life of enduring for My namesake and just pressing on." But the passion is gone. The ardor is gone. Do you understand? I'll never forget when I was 29 years old and it was July 16th, 1963 and I thought I'm sick and I have a sickness that no one can cure. I was working at that time in Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland. I was working on a growth retardation research team for an Australian doctor by the name of Dr. Cheek. And I remember calling him that morning and saying, Dr. Cheek, I can't come to work, I'm sick. I'm just sick and I'll, I'll just see you on Monday. And I thought I'm sick with a sickness that no one can cure. But that morning, while I was baking a cake and getting ready to take my boys camping I ran upstairs and I fell down beside my bed. I was a divorcee' with two boys, two boys I loved dearly, but two boys I was failing because I was living an immoral lifestyle. I was seeking love. I wanted somebody that

could make me happy instead of someone that I could make happy. And I remember falling down beside that bed and crying out to God and saying God, I don't care what you do to me. I don't care if I never see another man as long as I live. I don't care if you paralyze me from the neck down. I don't care what you do to my two boys if you'll just give me peace. And there on my knees on July 16th, 1963 I came to know the Prince of Peace. And I'm telling you I fell in love. I fell in love and not in the sense of that boy, girl romantic love. I don't mean that. But I'm talking about a deeper love. I'm talking about a gratitude, an ardor, a desire, just to please Him, a desire just to be with Him. There was such an incredible hunger in my life to know Him. All I wanted to do was read the Bible. All I wanted to do was talk about the Bible. All I wanted to do was talk about Jesus. I fell so in love with Him, so to speak, that I wanted to dress for Him. No longer did I want to wear those seductive dresses that I wore that showed off my figure and made me look sexy. I wanted to please Him. I was willing to wear sackcloth and ashes. I was willing to dress like John the Baptist did in the wilderness and eat wild locusts and honey. The money that I had and I had very little, but the money I had I wanted to give to Him. The diamond ring that my husband had given me was a huge, perfect diamond, a very expensive, a karat and a quarter and two quarter karats on each side, set in platinum. And I wanted to give it away. I had a beautiful, beautiful mink stole and I saw a something on World Vision and I just sold my stole and I sent them the money because everything I had belonged to Him. I didn't consider anything as being my own. I was in love. I was in love with this One that forgave my sins. I was in love with this One that opened my blind eyes. I was in love with this One that became an intimate friend and revealed these things to me. And if I wasn't reading the Bible I was reading biographies about other Christians and Charles Haden Spurgeon, Robert Murray McShane, Andrew Murray, Hudson Taylor, all these old saints that had knew a life of sacrifice. In those days it was not the promotion that it is today. In those days it was not the hero worship that it is today. I mean where we want autographs and everything. And in those days, I was looking at people whose lives were

consecrated to Jesus Christ, who were willing to go across the oceans and endure suffering for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In those days all I wanted to do was talk about the lover of my soul. That was what my first love was like. I remember the other thing. I remember, you know, I didn't know Christian songs. I mean I had been raised in church, but we had the old hymns and now I love those old hymns because they're filled with doctrine, but I just remember love songs that were being sung on the radio and I would sing them to Jesus. They were the kind of songs that you could sing to Jesus. And that's what I would do. And I just would adore Him. And I'll never forget when I heard for the very first time that wonderful, wonderful hymn How Great Thou Art, How Great Thou Art. He was great in my eyes. What was the early church like? I want you to go back to Acts, chapter 2. And I want you to see what happened in the book of Acts after these people came to know the Lord, Jesus Christ. And in Acts, chapter 2, in verse 41. "So then those who had received His Word were baptized and there were added to the church that day, 3,000 souls came into the body of Jesus Christ, made up the church, the first fruits of the church..." And it says, "... and they were continually devoting themselves to the apostle's teaching and to fellowship and the breaking of bread and to prayer." And you know the other thing when I came to know Christ, I wanted to be with Christians. And I remember this family and I remember that, they were called the Apple family and they were two people that had been divorced and had rough backgrounds and blended families and they were poor as all get out and we would go over to their house and she'd just take a big old pot off the stove and set it in the center of the table. And it was just a big old pot of soup or stew. We would sit there and we would talk about Jesus. I just wanted to be with people that loved Him. And that's what the early church was like. It says, "... and everyone kept feeling a sense of awe and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles and all those who believed were together and they had all things in common. And they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all as anyone might have need." That was the early church. That was the love, the ardor, the

passion. That was the love, the ardor I imagine of the church at Ephesus. And yet, something has happened. Something happened over the years and what happened was delight turned to duty. Delight turned to duty. Yes, their deeds were good. And yes they persevered and all those things we talked about, but the passion was gone. The love was gone. The commitment was gone. What about you? What about you? You know Bill Bright was a good friend, a dear brother, an awesome, awesome brother that I loved and that I had the pleasure of working with and he would invite me to be on the board of Prayer and Fasting and I worked with Global Pastors Network, and others and you know what I remember about Bill the most was his greatest fear was that he would lose his first love. His greatest fear was that the passion and the ardor would go away. And he and Vonette one day wrote out a contract to God telling God that everything that they had and they listed it, and everything that they would ever possess was going to belong to Him, that they were going to be His love slaves, that they were going to be His bondservants and that they would own nothing, but Jesus Christ. He's been an example to literally millions of people because he's a man that walked in that ardor of first love. You say, Kay I've lost it. What do I do? Well after this pause I'll tell you because God tells you what to do.

PART TWO

Thank you, Beloved, for listening to our messages. Thank you for wanting to be part of this ministry. Thank you for being more than just a taker. Thank you for being a partner. Thank you for wanting to know God and to love Him with all your heart and soul and mind and body and strength, because that's what Christianity is all about. Well let's go back and look at what you do when you've left your first love. Now I'm not going to tell you what to do. Jesus is going to tell you what to do. Because what Jesus told the church at Ephesus is what He is telling you. So let's look at it. It's Revelation, chapter 2 and I'm going to read verse 4 and 5 together. He says, "But this I have against you, that you have left your first love." You did the leaving, not

God. You're the one that made the distance between the two. You're the one so to speak that rolled over and said no, no, don't push me. You know, you just don't want Him, you know really to demand too much. You're willing to go through the routine but you don't want Him to demand too much. And so he says, "Remember, therefore, from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent." Now what's the lampstand? The lampstand is the church. When you go to Ephesus remember this, there's no church at Ephesus. It's just an ancient ruins now. He says if you don't repent I'm going to remove your lampstand. If you don't regain that first love, this is what's going to happen. So let's go back and look because he tells them to do three things. When you've lost your first love, not lost it. You know where it is. When you have left your first love, all right, when you have grown cold, when the passion is gone, when the zeal is gone, when the dedication, the consecration, the total commitment, the total abandonment is gone, what do you do? Well the first thing is you, "Remember, therefore from where you have fallen..." That's why. You remember what it was like when you first fell in love with Jesus, when you first experienced His love. So that's the first thing you do. The second thing he says is you repent. Now repent, the word for repent is metanoeo and it means to have a change of mind. Now listen, this church thought they were doing fine. They thought they were doing fine because their deeds were good, because they were toiling for God, because they were persevering, because they couldn't endure evil men, because they were checking out the false apostles, because they were walking in this perseverance and had endured for His name's sake and they hadn't grown weary; they were still marching on. The problem is they were marching on without that zeal, without that passion. It was like a well-trained army, but there was no longer that burning passion to fight the war to lay down your life. It was just I'm a soldier and this is my duty instead of I have the privilege of being a soldier and fighting for my country and laying down my life for my country. Do you see the difference? So he says, "Remember from

where you've fallen and repent, have a change of mind ...," And then number three: what are you to do? You're to do the deeds that you did at first, "... do the deeds you did at first." Now deeds is a word that you need to mark as you go through chapter 2 and chapter 3 'cause he's going to talk a lot about the church and their deeds. And he's going to talk about the church and their deeds because the deeds really show your relationship to God. Good deeds prove the fact that you are a child of God. Titus brings this out very clearly. So this is what you're to do, number one: You remember from where you have fallen. We've shown you how to do that. Number two: You repent. You come to your senses. You have a change of mind. You see, hey, the passion's gone; the ardor's gone. How do I get it back? Number three: You go back and you do the deeds that you did at first. You know many times in a marriage, what they will tell you if your love is waning or you're getting cold or complacent in your relationship, they'll suggest that you go back and that you have a date night. He's saying what did you do at first? See, what I did at first was I sang to the Lord. What I did at first was I spent a lot of time in His Word. And you'll notice that as a child of God and it's happened to me, you can get so busy that your time in the Word gets shorter and shorter and more hurried and more hurried. And listen, if you want to regain that first love and capture that ardor for the Lord, you need time, you need time. And see that's what makes a good relationship is time with each other, not hurried, not rushed, but time. So you need time. And then the other thing was I just gave it all away. I didn't claim that anything was my own because it all belonged to Him and whatever He wanted. And if I felt like He told me to call somebody or give something away or do this or do that I was very sensitive to His voice. I listened to Him very carefully. And what happens in a marriage many times is, is it gets to be same old, same old, so that you don't listen. And the same thing happens in your relationship to Jesus Christ. It can get, O, I've heard that verse before. O, I've read that before. I want to tell you something: when you pause and you read through the Word of God and you read it with a heart of devotion and a heart of love, you're eyes just about pop out because you see things that you hadn't seen

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before and you think, how did I miss it or there's a warmth there or there's a peace there or there's a sense of contentment because you're secure in His love and because you're hearing the voice of the lover of your soul. So he says this is what you're to do, those three things. And he says, "... or else, or else I am coming to you and I will remove your lamp stand." What is he telling you? He's telling you what 1 Corinthians, chapter 13 says, right in the middle of that teaching in 12, 13, and 14 on spiritual gifts, which they were so hot about. They were so hot about their gifts; they were so hot about the tongues and so hot about interpretation of tongues and they were so hot about prophesy, not the other gifts, but they were hot about that. And yet they weren't loving. And he had to stop in the 13th chapter, right in the middle of that segment and he had to deal with them about love and he said that, "... love never fails..." Love is essential. And so if the church, he says how are men going to know you're My disciples? If you have love towards one another. Well 1 John, which John also wrote, says this, that, "If you love God, you love the brother who is born, or you love the one who was born of God. So start loving others. Start doing good deeds for them and do it as unto Jesus ...," And he says, verse 6, "... yet you do have this, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate." You say, what are the Nicolaitanes? Well we'll talk about them when we get to the church at Pergamum. And then he says this: "He, who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches, to the churches, not just to the church at Ephesus." He wants every church, he wants every believer to listen and get to the message, because this is possible for every believer. And then he says, "To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." What does that mean? We'll talk about it on the next program.