

Lost love

'But I have this complaint against you. You don't love me or each other as you did at first! Look how far you have fallen from your first love! Turn back to me again and work as you did at first. If you don't, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches... Anyone who is willing to hear should listen to the Spirit and understand what the Spirit is saying to the churches.'

Our reading yesterday showed us that the Christians in Ephesus were hardworking, doctrinally sound followers of Jesus. He has a serious complaint against them, though. As a result of all their hard work, hard thinking and hard perseverance, they had become hard! Somehow, love for Christ and love for one another had been lost along the way.

It happens so easily, doesn't it? Our zeal can take on a life of its own and a hard edge. It becomes detached from devotion to God and people. These early Christians had been busy defending themselves and the gospel from false teachers—and in the process lost their passion for the person of Jesus. The call to repentance suggests that their motives for working hard had become misplaced. Jesus is calling them to work as they did when they first knew him—that is, be motivated by love and devotion, not duty and a desire to be right.

Notice the criticism is that there was a lack of love for both Jesus and one another. When we spot that someone is teaching what is false, it is easy for us to not just reject the teaching but also the teacher. It is as important to be gracious as it is to be right.

Many of us will have had experience of love growing cold in a relationship. It does nothing to foster the growth of the relationship and can lead to a drifting apart. Jesus warns against this in relation to himself. If the church does not turn back to loving Christ again, then their lampstand will be removed—they will no longer be counted as one of his churches.

What about your relationship with Jesus and with your fellow Christians? Do you need a fresh inflow of Christ's love for you to rekindle your love for him and others?

Prayer

Warm my cold heart, O Lord, I pray.

Elaine Duncan