

Message #1043  
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"FALLING IN LOVE ALL OVER AGAIN"  
{Revelation 2: 1-7 and Matthew 24: 12}

Trinity Presbyterian Church  
January 18, 2004

#### INTRODUCTION

Several questions for you to ponder...

1. What sins have you committed since we last worshiped together?
2. What temptations have you faced this past week?

...did you resist?

...or did you succumb?

We'll come back to these in a few moments.

Edwards...Whitefield...Wesley

During the eighteenth century there was the Great Awakening in the United States {The Evangelical Awakening in Great Britain}.

...during this time there was a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit

...incredible manifestations of God's presence and power

...many people chose to become believers during this period under the great preaching of Jonathan Edwards {Reformed}, George Whitefield {Presbyterian} and John Wesley,{Anglican} who founded the Methodist Church.

Jonathan Edwards' sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" is a literary classic. It is said that Edwards eyesight was very bad and he wore glasses that we might describe to as having coke bottle lenses.

...as he would preach, great conviction would come over the audience

...he would read his sermon from manuscript {held close to his face because of his poor eye sight}

...yet people would fall in the aisles...others would faint...overcome by the power of the Holy Spirit

George Whitefield, a Presbyterian and staunch Calvinist, was also used mightily by God when he preached. Whitefield had an enormously successful preaching mission in Bristol, England where thousands responded to the invitation to follow Jesus Christ as Savior. He was in "desperate need" of someone to organize those who had been "awakened" by the gospel so he "reached across the aisle" {as some might say today} for help from his friend, John Wesley. Wesley's theology was radically different from Whitefield's Calvinism. But, Wesley's methodical approach impressed Whitefield and they were best of friends in spite of theological differences.

Wesley organized those who had been "awakened" and formed what became know as the "Fetter Lane Society"--groups who gathered to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, in order to encourage one another in their spiritual walk.

The "Fetter Lane Society" divided into small groups of twelve known as "bands."

They met once or twice a week.

...each meeting was characterized by a time of confession

...mutual accountability

...unreserved openness was expected.

Each person was asked to respond to five questions composed by Wesley...

1. What known sins have you committed since our last meeting?
2. What temptations have you met with?
3. How were you delivered?
4. What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin or not?
5. Have you nothing you desire to keep secret?

John Wesley felt that conversion was more of a process within an individual's life which began with an "awakening" to the things of God.

I identify with that in my own life.

Wesley felt that...

...once an individual was "awakened" there needed to be a period of testing to see if this "awakening" was truly "regeneration!"

...he contended that "regeneration" could only be determined over a period of time when the individual received pastoral care and close examination.

He altered the "Fetter Lane Society" into weekly "class meetings." {Once again groups of twelve who met for pastoral care, examination, encouragement, and exhortation} These class meetings were the centerpiece of Methodism for the next hundred years until the mid-19th century.

...God worked mightily in the lives of people who were involved in these classes

...There was a sense of accountability

...there was a feeling that others cared

...that others were praying for you

...that others were willing to bear your burdens

We read in the Book of James...

"Is any one of you in trouble? They should pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is any one of you sick? They should call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven; therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous person is powerful and effective!" {James 5:13-16}

...the Bible teaches that we are to be accountable to one another

...where there is a need...we are to reach out

...when filled with joy...we are to share the glow

...we are called to be a supportive community!

THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS...

...was commended by Jesus in our text of the morning. It may have been from this church that Wesley got his model for his "class meetings." "I know your deeds, 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..."

This was a church that was involved...

...it was a church that was a beehive of activity

...membership was not automatic

...persons were tested after their spiritual "awakening"

...commitment was required.

People in the neighborhood knew that something was going on at the Ephesus Church.

...their reputation for orthodoxy was impeccable.

...they had been warned to be on the look-out for "false prophets" and they screened people carefully who sought membership.

They followed the Biblical admonition...

"...not to believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God..." {1 John 4:1}

Ephesus from all appearance was a model church...a shining example of an evangelical church...one that would've ranked high on the list of churches to join.

But, all was not fine in "Mount Idy," as Charlie Weaver might have said. The church at Ephesus had a major problem. Jesus says to them...

"I hold this against you. You have forsaken your first love!"

...they had form

...they had activity

...they were Biblically sound

...but...they had forsaken their first love!

...they lost their vision

...they no longer had a passion for God

Their love for the Lord was not lost...it was just put on the back burner {Like the woman who left her water pot behind once she met Jesus. She didn't lose it, she just left it behind. Eventually she had to return to re-claim it}.

...the honeymoon period of their relationship to Christ as over

...they were so zealous that they forgot the reason for their zeal...their love for Jesus!

The same thing happened in the Methodist Church...and the same thing is happening in church after church today.

Jesus listed as one of the signs of "the end of the age"-- "Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold; but, the one who stand firm to the end will be saved!" {Matthew 24:12-13}

So...the question I ask you this morning...

#### HOW'S YOUR LOVE LIFE?

Has there ever been a time in your life when you loved Jesus more than you do this morning?

Has there been a time when you were spiritually more fit than you are now?

The the answer to either of these questions is "yes" then my next question is: What are you going to do about it?

...no one else can resolve this dilemma for you

...only you know where your heart is today.

Jesus gave the Church at Ephesus the REMEDY...

"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 and REMOVE your lampstand from its place...whoever has an ear...LISTEN...to the one who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life..."

1. REFLECT back to the time when you had that burning hunger for the things of God...that insatiable thirst.

...REMEMBER your desire to study His Word

...your longing to be in His house

...the quality of your prayer life

...how excited you were to share with others your faith {when a program like ALPHA excited you because it presented a golden opportunity to invite someone to hear the good news.}

...your longing for fellowship with other believers

...REMEMBER how much you loved Jesus!

2. REPENT--turn back--return to the One who loves you!

3. RETURN...come home!

4. SEEK OUT someone in whom you have complete and total confidence with whom you can share...one whom you know walks with the Lord.

...talk with them

...share your inner dilemma

...ask them to pray with you

Then, your love will be rekindled...and then you will experience the great outpouring of God's Holy Spirit in your life!

Peter wrote...

"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." {1 Peter 3:15}

Paul wrote to the Corinthians...

"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith, test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you--unless, of course, you fail the test?" {1 Corinthians 13:5-6}