

FREEDOM'S GATE

Publication of: A New & Living Way, Inc. | PO Box 259, Ashley IN 46705 | 260-349-0928 or 866-963-1234
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Return to Your First Love

"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. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love."

These are the words of Jesus in Revelation chapter 2: 2-4 as He is speaking to the church at Ephesus. He first commends them for their hard work and labor for His name's sake, but yet He tells them He has something against them. They have left their first love.

Revelation 2:5 tells us to remember from where we have fallen. The word fallen in the Greek means to drop away, to be driven out of one's course, to take none effect. Leaving our first love means we are no longer effective and we are on the wrong course.

Just what is this "first love?" For many years, I would read this verse and feel convicted that I needed to love God more. So I would "try" to love Him; I would read my Bible more, pray more, go to more prayer meetings, etc. All to no avail. Loving God more seemed like an impossible task to me.

It was and for good reason! Let me show you why. Look at 1 John 4:10 with me: "In this is love, **not that we loved God, but that He loved us** and sent His Son to be the propitiation (atoning sacrifice) for our sins." The first love is NOT us loving God, but Him loving us.

That's why we get off course and lose our effectiveness. The devil subtly leads us back into working hard **for** Jesus and laboring for His name's sake. His motive is to wear you out trying to love God with all your heart. Saints, the only way for you to love God is for Him to love you first and you return His love back to Him. You have no love of your own to give Him. Your flesh man is void of love for God because

the carnal mind controls the flesh and hates God (Romans 8:6, 7). (The word enmity in verse 7 means deep hatred.)

1 John 4:19 says "We love Him **because** He first loved us." When we receive God's love for us, loving Him is the easiest thing in the world. There is no "try" to it.

You don't even have to "try" to believe anymore, you don't have to "try" to know anymore, you don't have to "try" to love God and people anymore. It's been done **for** you. If you are born again, the believer is on the inside of you, the knower is on the inside of you, the lover of God and man is on the inside of you.

1 John 3:1 says, "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called the sons of God." God loves us so much that He made us **just like His Son Jesus** - a literal part of His Body. That may go crosswise of your carnal mind, but that's alright. You need a new mind-set anyway. Start receiving with the mind of Christ and it will sound perfectly normal.

Father loves us! He loves us so much that when we accepted Jesus as our Savior, He put us **into** the Body of His Son, Jesus. Then all the promises became available to us and this is what He said about those promises. YES! 2 Corinthians 1:20 says all the promises in Him are yes. There are no NO'S, only YES. God loves us. Romans 8:32 is a remarkable verse. The Word says He gives us **freely all things WITH the Son**. I can't say it too many times. The Father loves you! He loves you the same way He loves Jesus. You are His Son the same way Jesus is. Jesus is the firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:29).

This fall I came across a portion of scripture I want to share with you. Ephesians 2:4 in the Amplified Version says "But God - so rich is He in His mercy! Because of and in order to **satisfy the great and wonderful and intense love** with which He loved us." When I read this, it "grabbed" me to think God loves us so much that He **has** to satisfy that love! He did that by making us alive and in union with Christ (He gave us the very life of Christ Himself), raised us up together and made us sit down together in Christ **while we were still dead in our sins!** (Ephesians 2:5-7).



I am going to start out with a prayer from Ephesians 1:17-23. Father, I know that You have already given us Your Spirit. So, I pray that as we hear and read Your Word that the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of You will bring understanding and enlightenment. We receive it in Jesus' name, Amen.

Now, I was lying awake at 3:00 in the morning with a sore throat and kids coughing. That doesn't seem to be a picture of the finished work that Jesus did for us. I began to meditate on Isaiah 53:5: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." The finished work of Jesus lit up in me. It seems I have meditated on this scripture many times, but this time was different. As I began to question where this sickness was coming from, I then went through my list. It came from Satan, it came from the fall of Adam and sin, it came from me opening a door. **Listen**, it

Receive God's love. That is what the subject of our Ladies Bible studies was this fall. To my surprise, the Spirit led us the very first week to Revelation 2:4. At first it seemed elementary to me. Everybody knows God loves them, don't they? We all were about to experience a life change; we didn't know what wonderful blessings God had in store for us.

Our assignment for the first week was not to tell God that we loved Him. We were only to receive His love. How did we do that? We simply **said**, "Father, we receive Your love. You love me and I receive it." In the weeks following, we kept at it just receiving the Father's love for us. We would tell our Father, "I am your daughter (son), You are my Father. You love me and I receive Your love for me." Loving God back became a natural overflow of His love for us. And.....loving others also became an overflow of that love.

There are too many testimonies to write here, but I could fill several pages with stories of changed lives from this simple "assignment" from the Lord. How grateful we are; how much peace it has brought and how much deliverance has been accomplished.



For me personally, it has brought new experiences. It seems very often when I need an answer to prayer or wisdom for a situation and I don't seem to be "getting" it, instead of getting frustrated, I just start receiving the love of God. It never fails; my answer comes, the prayer or need is answered, the wisdom is made known. This is changing my life and I praise and love my Father because He first loved me.

~ Anne Pranger

A New and Living Way New Creation Conference 2009

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doesn't matter where it came from. It matters where it went! It went **erased, emitted, and destroyed** by the Blood of Jesus. It was by disobedience that the knowledge of good and evil came. But Jesus was sent to fix that problem, and He already came and fixed it. So if you have received Jesus as your Lord and Savior, then you already are fixed. The old is already made new. You are new. We died with Him and were raised with Him. (Colossians 2:12) We have a new life in our intercessor and advocate, Jesus Christ. (I John 2:1) Our New Life includes New Faith, New Health, New Wealth, New Peace, New Love, New Everything. The thief comes to kill, steal, and destroy, but Jesus came to give life and more abundant life. Satan can't kill, steal, or destroy the new. He just tries to keep you in old thinking. He knows if you think old you will act old. He really can't change the fact that we are new creatures.

We can choose life or death (Deut. 30:19). We can **choose to feel** like we don't deserve everything good, just because we don't always do everything good or we don't read and pray enough. And we can choose to let the consequences of the old man still be alive in our lives. **Or** we can choose Life and Life more abundantly. How do you choose Life? Well, most of us already have. We just need to acknowledge Him and receive Him in everything. (Proverbs 3:6) I always thought it sounded simple to receive from Jesus, but it never really seemed simple. But here is how I have been receiving God's love for me. When I have wrong thoughts I just stop and quietly or loudly (depends on where I am) say, "I receive Your love for this situation, for my thoughts, for my relationships, my fi-



nances." If you get a bill that seems like it can't be paid, you stop and say, "Oh, I am a new creation and have new finances and I receive the new." That applies to everything. We are new in all things **in Jesus**. Whether we choose to live in the old or the new, **WE ARE THE NEW**. So, we might as well start receiving the new. This is God's gift to us. This is His Glory. The New Creation in Jesus is His Glory and **that is us**. If you are ever thinking that you would just love to see the Glory of God and that would be so great - well, you're looking at it. **Quit judging yourself and start judging Jesus**. Jesus was already judgment for you. I don't think you are going to find anything wrong with Jesus. We always seem to be looking for guilt and blame, whether it be blaming someone else or blaming ourselves. There always seem to be guilt, blame and judgment in the Old Testament. As my wise husband has told me, the Old Testament is a prophecy of Jesus. The judgment, guilt and blame you read of in the Old Testament is all the stuff that Jesus was going to come and die for. So don't see yourself or the Old Testament as something that still needs fixed, because we have a new self and a New Testament. It is fixed. You are fixed. Stop seeing yourself as broken. God loves you and has given you everything He has. As we start our New Year, let's start receiving our New. It is a new year no matter what we want. Now you are a new creation, whether it looks that way or not.

Let's all enjoy the New Year and our New position in Him.

Blessed and Happy NEW Year
~ Minde Pranger