

The Letter to Ephesus: Love, Hate, and Intolerance

Revelation 2:1-7

Last Sunday we introduced our new series entitled, “Dear Church,” focusing upon the seven letters to the seven churches in the Book of Revelation. Today we hear the words spoken to the church at Ephesus.

Welcome to Ephesus!

- See Acts 19-20 and the Book of Ephesians

Love, hate, and intolerance – in this letter these are all described as good things (!?)

1. Good job, Ephesians—for your intolerance and hate (2:2,6)

- “I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that **you cannot tolerate** wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false.” (2:2, NIV)
 - Not tolerating wicked people? This is crucial to spiritual health, but what does this look like?
- “Yet this you have: **you hate** the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.” (2:6; cf. 2:15)
 - We don’t know for sure who the Nicolaitans were and what they were doing
- Sometimes it’s simplistically suggested that intolerance and hatred are (always) bad. Not so.
 - We know that Jesus didn’t tolerate the devil or his lies!

- And *everyone* has a cherished place for intolerance and hatred of certain things and people

- Ephesus was a faithful, persevering church (2:3)

2. Bad job, Ephesians—you have lost the love you had at first

- “But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first.” (2:4-5a)
 - You can be reliable, principled, faithful, and do good work—and lose *love*. Married people know this!
 - The surprising fix: “repent” and “do the works you did at first”?

Let us eat! Communion today, the Tree of Life tomorrow (2:7)

Questions for Further Reflection and Application:

1. Read Revelation 2:1-7. List three of your own adjectives to describe the church at Ephesus.
2. The letter contains both encouragements and criticisms. Can you see why the appeal at the beginning of 2:7 is needed? How do you receive this appeal?
3. Why is the intolerance in 2:2 a good thing?
 - a. This could be expressed in bad ways, however. How should a church properly express this?
4. The church lost the love they had at first (2:4-5). This is easy to do, but how can they practically recover from this?
 - a. How about you? If this describes you, what practical steps can you take to reverse this?