

“When My Love to Christ Grows Weak”

The beloved hymn continues, “When for deeper faith I seek, Then in thought I go to Thee, Garden of Gethsemane!” (sic, “When My Love To Christ Grows Weak” by J.R. Wreford and Mrs. Jos. F. Knapp; *Hymns for Worship*, revised; 1987, Shepard-Stevens Music, Inc.)

It’s a problem most Christians face at one time or another- our *love to Christ grows weak*. The apparent causes vary: family crisis; debilitating disease; the death of a loved one despite fervent prayers to the contrary; some form of persecution; or even the spiritual failings of a respected fellow Christian. But no matter the specifics, it is almost always connected to *weakened faith*. These two, our *faith in* and our *love to/for Christ*, are so closely joined as to be practically inseparable. So, correction through the strengthening of one often resolves both issues. As the hymn further suggests, remembering the *sacrificial love* of Jesus- “See that suffering, friendless One, weeping, praying there alone,” and further, “There behold His agony, Suffered on the bitter tree; See His anguish, see His faith, Love triumphant still in death” (sic, *IBID*), can’t help but to inspire and strengthen our love for Him. Being thus reminded of the sacrifice required to bring about our *purification from sin* is something we need constantly, as 2Peter 1:9-10 indicates. It’s always “good for what ails us.”

But as suggested above, there is another component to *strengthening our* (weakened) *love for Christ*: the *increasing/rebuilding of our faith*. Let’s note the example of the Ephesians in this regard. Revelation 2:1-7 provides pertinent details:

- They had done well in many respects- their *deeds, toil, and perseverance* are commended, v.2a;
- Further, they had apparently properly dealt with *evil men*, and even *tested and exposed false apostles*, v.2b;
- They had *not grown weary*, but instead *persevered and endured*, v.3;
- But, and this significant, they had also *left their first love*, v.4.

As my old preacher friend, Larry Bilbo, described them, “They were *right*, but not *radiant*.” They were doing a lot of *good* things, but apparently doing them from mere rote or obligation rather than being properly motivated by *love*. Obviously, while their *actions* still appeared righteous, their *love to Christ* had *grown weak*.

Having thus experienced the same problem we sometimes face, the “prescription” given in Revelation 2:5 becomes very relevant. It is three-fold:

1. *Remember from where you have fallen*. This harkens back to the *three years* (cf. Acts 20:31) Paul had spent with them in Ephesus. During that time, as recorded in Acts 19:1-20, “*the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified*” (v.17), and “*the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing*” (v.20). All of which means that their *faith* was growing!
2. *Repent*. Repentance is a *change of mind* that leads to a change of *course or direction* (and therefore leads to a *change of affiliation*). They needed to *reverse course*, so to speak, to get back to where they had been previously when both their *faith* and *love* were doing magnificently.
3. *Do the deeds you did at first*. After *repentance* had brought them back to the foundations and motivations of faith, they needed to reproduce the previous dedicated mindset and activities that had resulted in the explosive growth of their faith and love for Christ in the first place, cf. Acts 19:18-19.

So, when our “love to Christ grows weak,” we need to do the same things the Ephesians were told to do: 1) *Remember* the sacrifice of Jesus that made our relationship with God possible; 2) *Repent* from the course of depletion and stagnation we’re on, and *go back* to the beginning; and then, 3) *Repeat* what you did to grow your faith and love in the first place- dedicate yourself to *learning/knowing* the Word (cf. Acts 19:8-10 and Romans 10:17), and whole-heartedly commit *your way* to Christ by removing impediments (Acts 19:18-19).

When we find our faith waning and our love for Christ fading, we sometimes want to blame God, or others. We may even cry out for God to “*help my unbelief*” as did the man in Mark 9:24. The true problem may be much closer to home. Ultimately, each one of us is responsible for his own faith, and his own love for Christ. Others can encourage and assist us (Galatians 6:1-2), or discourage and fail us, but we all must “*examine his own work*” and “*bear his own load*” (Galatians 6:3-5). If your faith and love are decreasing rather than increasing, don’t put off *remembering, repenting, and repeating* so that you can be not only “right,” but also “radiant”! (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)