

Bernard Palmer
on reviewing and
reordering priorities

Forsaken your FIRST LOVE?

A great problem facing Christian doctors is that our responsibilities can become so important that our love for the Lord Jesus, and our desire to achieve what he wants, become of lesser importance to us.

Our careers, hobbies, friends, reputations and even our families can become our first love. They can, in reality, become a god.

When God addressed the Christians at Ephesus¹ he noted they worked hard, were intolerant of immorality, were astute at recognising false teachers, and doggedly pressed on as Christians. These were all admirable. But something was wrong, and the diagnosis was very serious. They had lost their 'first love' – their devotion to Jesus. This wasn't an accident either – it was a deliberate choice. The text says 'You have forsaken your first love'. It is as if the Christians were having affairs with other gods, although of course they still claimed to be following the Christian way.

The prescribed remedy was clear: 'Remember the height from which you have fallen!' Look back to those times in the past when the Lord Jesus meant so much more to you. 'Repent and do the things you did at first.' Change direction, get your priorities right again, and begin again to do those things you used to do.

Then comes a warning: 'If you do not repent...' If you don't rethink and reorder, both you and your church will die. History confirms that when churches lose their devotion to Jesus they crumble. An emphasis on liturgy, ethics, or social matters will not save them.

How can we as doctors prevent this happening to us? Can we follow the educational vogue for appraising ourselves and being accountable, and similarly assess our own spiritual progress or regress? We could ask questions like:

- How often do I pray, and mean, 'Your kingdom come...on earth'?
- How central is the local church and its members in my life?
- How often do I study the Word of God? Daily, most days, seldom?
- How often do I talk to non-Christians about the Lord? Once a month? Less?
- Do I go out of my way to help and encourage others practically?
- What proportion of my taxed income do I give to the Lord's work?
- How much do I support overseas mission by giving, prayer and regular contact?
- How much do I fight temptations like pornography, pride, possessions?

And would the Lord agree with our answers?

Bernard Palmer is a surgeon living in Hertfordshire

reference

1. Revelation 2: 1-7