

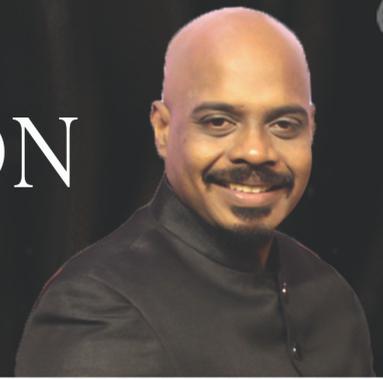
ROCK ETERNAL CHURCH

THE SEVEN



**SERMON
SERIES**

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WHAT HAVE YOU LOST?

I believe you are all excited to be part of this new series –Seven.

What is special about the number Seven (7)? It is a very special number in the Bible.

I encourage you to continue watching the “seven” series in the coming weeks for it will have interesting information and deep understanding of God’s word about the end days from the book of Revelation. This series will have the complex things explained in simple words – most importantly, what God wants to speak to you in the last days.

Why Seven? You may be wondering why Seven (7). It is a very important number in the Bible.

Each week, one of the seven Churches mentioned in the book of Revelation will be discussed. The Lord speaks to seven Churches about the things that will happen in the last days. Each church represents a church of the world and also, it represents a believer.

The title of the first episode of the Seven series is “What have you lost?” Sometimes we keep wondering what have we lost, we don’t even realise it and we think everything is perfect in our life. We would have lost something but the work of the enemy is to keep us thinking that everything is going on fine.

We will look into the significance of the number seven (7) and its importance according to the Bible. It has a deeper meaning – from the book of Genesis to Revelation, the number “7” has been used more than 700 times and it has been used more in the book of Revelation.

What does “7” signify in the beginning? Seven refers to completion and perfection. In Genesis, God created the world in six days and gave rest on the seventh day. Even in Deuteronomy, God speaks about working for six years and taking rest in the seventh year. God spoke seven different sentences on the cross. Seven refers to completion in the Bible.

God had performed seven healings on the seventh day (Sabbath day). Seven not only signifies completion and perfection but healing as well. Elisha instructed Naaman to dip himself seven times in order to be healed. A slave has to go free in the seventh year. Even for forgiveness seven times seventy (seven) plays a part. Even promises and oaths are linked with Seven (Sheba – Hebrew word).

Even the rainbow that the Lord showed, as a sign after stopping the rain and flood had seven colors! Abraham offered seven animals on the altar for the sacrifice. Israelites went around Jericho for seven days and seven times on the seventh day. So, seven has a deeper meaning in the Bible.

In the book of Revelation, God speaks to seven churches about the last days. The One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, the One who is among the seven lampstands, Who holds seven stars. The seven stars are the seven angels who represent seven churches.

God wants to give a very important message to all these seven churches. We would have heard a lot of messages but the seven messages to the seven churches are very important to us. You may be wondering why God spoke to only seven churches in Asia Minor. These churches were a representation of the other churches, that they fall into one of the seven categories and as a representation to the believers. This was written by the Holy Spirit through John. He was in the Island of Patmos, he was exiled. He heard a voice from the Lord, saw a vision and then he gave the messages to each church.

THE FIRST CHURCH IS THE CHURCH OF EPHESUS

What did God speak to this church and what is God speaking to us through this church? The message to this church is “What have you lost?” God is also asking us the same question – What have you lost? The way the Lord speaks to all these seven churches is the only similarity among all the seven. First, God gives an introduction about who He is.

Second, about how this church was, how the church is and how the church should be – what was their mistake or sin and if they repent and change themselves, what would be their reward. God is the speaker, He gives a description about Himself, gives commendation about the church, gives them the remarks, how they need to repent and what will be their reward. Most importantly, how they were, how they are and how they should be.

Today, this is very important to us – most of the time, we forget how we were, we don't realise how we are and we don't know how we need to be.

We all will fall either into all the categories or one of the seven.

In Revelation chapter 2, verse 1

1 – To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands.

God introduces Himself as the One who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. Why does God speak to the church in Ephesus?

Some information about Ephesus city is as follows:

- **Ephesus is the most important city in Asia Minor.**
- **Ephesus is a great commercial city.**
- **Ephesus depended more upon the trade that came from religious superstition.**
- **The people of Ephesus were sensual and self-centred.**
- **Ephesus also contains the seven wonders of the ancient world – the temple of Diana.**
- **Ephesus was the centre of cult worship.**
- **Ephesus had the temple of Artemis.**
- **The church of Ephesus was established by Paul in his third missionary journey.**
- **Ephesus became the residence of Apostle John even after the exile.**

Ephesus was a very important city and Paul established the church in his missionary journey. The people there were worshipping the cult God Artemis. It was a commercial and trade city. Many Jews were there. God has a message for this city.

Revelation 2:2-3

2 – 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.

3 – You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

God says you were all good and I know how you stood and ran for me; how you addressed the false doctrine; how you were able to identify false teachers and apostles and how you were able to endure difficult times.

God started with an appreciation.

Many of you stand for God – God is reminding how you were and how your lives were – your lives were good and you were running for God.

But now, what had happened

Revelation 2:4-5

4 – Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first.

5 – Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

You stood for me patiently, but you have lost the first love though you do all things for Christ.

You did everything for love in the beginning, but today, you are missing that first love though you are doing things for God. And God says, “Remember how you were and repent!”

Four important things that the Lord wants to tell us today are:

- 1. Remember**
- 2. Repent**
- 3. Repeat, and**
- 4. Reward**

1. Remember

We should always remember how we started. We fail to remember how we started our walk with God – the kind of passion and the love we had when God saved us. We forget to be with God, rather we start doing for God. We keep running for God instead of being with God.

When people start their married life, as husband and wife, their life is joyful. That’s how we start our life with God as well. The kind of love they show towards each other, in the first six

months of their married life. People around can easily find out that they are newly married. Their life would be amazing and with surprises at the beginning. After a year or two, they say that they have got used to it — love decreases. But after five or ten years, we do it for the sake of doing it. We run around to take care of the family and needs of the family, but the love for the family is not there. You started well — your family, your job and your relationship with God — we testified and expressed our joy. As days go by, we live for the sake of living and do it because we are forced to do it, and love and compassion are not there. Most importantly, many people go to church, live a life for God and run for Him, but love is not there. We do things out of compulsion and it has become an activity in our life.

Remember How You Started—God is asking Ephesus to remember how they started. All that you are doing is good but remember how and from where you started. And, how you are now — you have lost the love. What have you lost today? You have lost the love and you are living without it. No love on your family members, on your job and even on God. You have lost the first love on God, love on your marriage, on your children and your career. Because you have lost the love on God, you are not able to love people and things around.

God says, “I have one thing against you. You have lost the first love you had.” We speak about all the worldly things that we lack and we are worried about it.

But God wants to remind us that the first love on God is missing which is the most important thing in our life. If God questions, “You don’t love me anymore, so why should I do it for you?”, what would you reply? But God does not want to point at you, but He wants us to understand our problem, to remember where we were and where we are, now.

2. Repent

God wants you to repent. Why God wants you to repent is because if you repent, you’ll go back to that first love you had on God. We pray that this pandemic and the current situation to change but praying alone is not sufficient, we need to repent. And only if we repent, God will deliver us from the problems or challenges that we are praying for. Prayer needs to lead you to repentance. What is the motive of your prayer? We always pray for materialistic blessings. Do we pray to God for Him to help us love Him more than all the things of this world? Let's get back to the first love. God wants us to repent.

3. Repeat

God wants this church to repeat. What they had done before, God wants them to do it again.

Revelation 2:55 – Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

Do what you did at first. It means God loved what you did earlier. You were faithful when you started, you ran for God, and your prayers were only about your relationship with God. And God wants you to do that again. God is not insisting this just on your prayer life alone, but on your spouse and children; the joy that you had when you started. Get back to that first love.

Repeat means getting back to that first love. We may be thinking that we don't have the worldly blessings in our life, but the real blessing lies in loving God with all your heart. Do you know what you lack big time today? You lack in the love towards God. When you have that first love towards God again, you will start getting everything back in your life.

4. Reward

Revelation 2:7

7 – Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the victorious one, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

We hear about different kinds of rewards, but God says if you can repent, repeat and change yourself, you will start to win. And for people who win and are victorious, God will give them the right to eat from the tree of life, the best reward that we can get from God. The world does anything or goes to any extreme, to get the reward. The Lord will reward you in heaven and also on earth. The love of God is the most needed one.

What have you lost? You have lost the love.

When we return to the first love and confess to God that you need this love, God will bless us and give us all the blessings. We go to church; we give tithes and offerings only because we expect them in return from God and not out of love for God. We expect others to pray for us. For God to answer our prayers, He expects us to pray to Him, speak to Him. Get back to the first love, and if you could get back to the first love, God will give you the fruit from the tree of life. This is the greatest blessing we could ever receive. The first love can bring all the blessings into our lives. It is very important.

When people are diagnosed with COVID-19, they are taken to the hospitals, and they don't come back or they come back dead – this is the current scenario. We will not have time to reconcile or repent during these times. A boy told us that he was not able to reconcile with his father for he died due to Corona. He loved his father but he couldn't say to his dad that he still loves him; his father passed away without knowing that and it was too late. If God has given us another day in our life, we must repent and get back to the first love. Anything can happen. We do not know when God will come. Repent and confess to God and say that you love Him. Do not lose this opportunity, do not lose the first love. You might have lost the love because of the problems around you or you might have been forced to lose that love. But pray to God and ask Him to help to get back to that first love with God. Give God the priority.

Then forgive the bitterness you have with your family members and reconcile with them now. Love your spouse, love your children, love your parents and tell them that they are important to you. Complete repentance is not just repenting and saying that you love Jesus alone. God says “Love me and love your neighbours.” Only when we love the people God had given in our life, we show that we truly love God. Repenting and loving God is not just about loving God, but also loving all the people around us.

Pray to God and confess how you were; ask God for His forgiveness and for His help to get back to the first love and not to continue looking at the problems around and being worried about them. Tell Him that He is your first love and He is the most important person in your life. Amen.