**University Heights Church of Christ**

**445 Columbia Ave., Lexington, KY 40508**

**(859) 255-6257**

[**www.uheightschurch.com**](http://www.uheightschurch.com)

**WORSHIP SERVICES**

**Sunday**

Bible Study: 9:45 AM

Worship: 10:45 AM; 6:00 PM

**Wednesday**

Bible Study: 7:30 PM (This is immediately followed by a short worship period)

**First Friday of Each Month**

Singing: 7:30 PM

**LEADERSHIP**

**Elders**

David Collins

John Thompson

Troy Antle

**Evangelist**

Adam Litmer

**Deacons**

Richard Brundige

Matt Thompson

Adam Litmer

Bill Morelan

Jim Parsons

Pat Seabolt

Adam Daniels

Jamie Powell

**FROM JESUS**

“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great one’s exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” Matthew 20:25-28

**IN NEED OF PRAYERS**

Luke Ramey, John Thompson, Declan Weatherholt, David Seabolt, Jeff Howerton, Rhonda Boyd (and her sister, Dorothy), Louis Harrod, Paul Atkisson, Ed Allison, Sheila Lawson, Keia Burton, Robert Brundige, Susie Burton, Valerie and Barry Boyd, Janett’s mother and stepfather, Sandy Driver, Erlene Young, Larry Sells, Evelyn Damron, Jennifer Dunbar, Jean Gartland, John Blessing, William Roberts, Paul Lyda, Pete Soro, The Smith family, our brethren in southern Philippines, our brethren in Zimbabwe, Jamie Powell’s father, Bruce Feltner, Harleigh Spartman, Fay Thomas

**Where Is Love?**

University Heights Messenger

Volume 9‐‐Number 29

July 2, 2017

Adam Litmer

Our brethren in Ephesus were hard working, long enduring, claim testing, error detecting machines (Revelation 2:2-3). They did not grow weary and one had to wake up awfully early to sneak *any* false teaching past them. These brethren were the quintessential “book, chapter, and verse” sort. Jesus commended them for it. He recognized that these brethren were willing to suffer persecution for His name’s sake and were unwilling to put up with those who made false claims concerning their own positions or revealed truth. Paul had warned these brethren that men speaking twisted and perverted things would seek to infiltrate their number, some rising from among the elders themselves (Acts 20:28-31), and it is evident that at this point they were still very alert and carefully monitoring for even the slightest hint that Paul’s warning was becoming reality. It bears repeating that they were commended for these things showing Jesus approved of their vigilance. There’s a lesson there for us.

Alas, the uncomfortable, “but I have this against you”, immediately followed the commendation. Their great problem was that they had abandoned the love they had at first (2:4). Earlier in this article I called these brethren “machines”, which was precisely their problem. Once programmed, a finely tuned machine will perform its operation at a very high level. That’s what these brethren were doing as it related to doctrine and patience through persecution. However, a machine, no matter how finely tuned, will perform its task without passion, enthusiasm, or love because, at the end of the day, it is just a machine. Unfortunately, that’s what our brethren in Ephesus had become. They could detect and refute error as well as anyone in the brotherhood (they may have been the best), yet they were doing it mechanically, with all the enthusiasm and passion of automatons. It was a significant problem that needed immediate correction (2:5).

The Ephesian problem is not an uncommon one. Take a moment to read Psalm 50:7-15 to find God rebuking His people of old for the same thing. Theirs was not a failure to perform the correct worship actions; indeed, they excelled at it (8). Theirs was not a failure to sacrifice of their own goods in worship to God; indeed, God says that they were doing just that (9). Their problem was that genuine thanksgiving had vanished from their worship (not outward actions that seem to indicate the presence of thanksgiving but the *inward reality* that gave meaning to the actions) and they were not performing their vows to the Most High (14). The greatest vow they could give was that they would love the Lord their God with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their mind (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:36-38). This vow requires that one worship God with affection, enthusiasm, and intelligence. It takes a tender heart, not a mechanical one, to perform this vow.

We, too, have vows we must perform to our Lord. We promised Him the throne of our hearts when we accepted His gracious invitation to be cleansed from our sins (Romans 5-6). Part of this is the willingness to learn His truth well enough to know what He requires doctrinally and to be willing to uphold and defend it (Jude 3; 2 John 9-11). This our Ephesian brethren did exceptionally well. Yet the foundation upon which our willingness to do these things must be built is love for our Savior. We certainly have a responsibility to do precisely what our Ephesian brethren were commended for in Revelation 2:2-3, yet it’s a responsibility that must be fed from a spring running much deeper than *just* sense of duty.

I very much appreciate the way the NIV renders 1 Thessalonians 1:3. *We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.* Labor prompted by love. Love for God, His truth, His children, and the souls of all people. *This* is what our Ephesian brethren had lost somewhere along the way. This is not at all to say they had grown *hostile* to God and His truth. Far from it! They had simply forgotten why they were doing it all in the first place. They would find that love again if they returned their focus to the marvelous grace shown to them and remembered their helpless condition without God and the blood of Jesus Christ. I hope they remembered (5).

Allow me to borrow some of the language of Paul from 1 Corinthians 13 to try and drive this point home. If I speak the truth on baptism and refute every argument with doctrinal soundness, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I can host a Bible study, answering every question with an appropriate passage, but have not love, I am nothing. If I attend every worship assembly and work day, even when I am not feeling well at the time, but have not love, I gain nothing. Do you get the point?

Beloved, may we strive for doctrinal soundness, for the ability to recognize and refute error in all its forms, for the willingness to patiently endure though trial and tribulation, and for the love that must inspire it all. *So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*