Revelation 2:6 “But this you have, that you hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.”

Hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes - Notice how they did not hate the Nicolaitanes but the deeds performed by them, so to it was with God. God hates the sin but loves the sinner.

The preaching of grace without law was the sin of the Nicolaitanes and it lead to sensuality amongst those who accepted it, which was an abomination in God’s sight. Thus although the first love was lacking, the doctrinal purity of the Church remained steadfast, which God commended. It is not often we read that God hates anything, but this doctrine of grace without law is one thing he does. It reappears in the Church of Pergamos.

Revelation 2:15 “So have you also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.”

Nicolaitanes - As far as we can find out from inspiration, those that were called Nicolaitanes were those that made the law of God of none effect through grace. Jude 4 gives us a glimpse of this group that turned the grace of God into lasciviousness or sexual freedom, thus they were believing that the law doesn’t matter for God’s grace covers us. But the verse calls them ungodly men.

Them that hold - Under the Church of Ephesus the deeds of the Nicolaitanes was not tolerated. But here we see that, in the Church during this time, there were those who held to these false teachings.

NOTE: The doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitans within the Church itself reveal that there was a certain number of people that, while desiring to be true to the word also desired to be united or loyal to the Church as a whole body. Thus they sought to promote tolerance of the apostasy that was leading the Church astray. This is where the issue of Balaam becomes very clear to us, in that he encouraged the Israelites to join with the Moabites in the “harmless” feast which eventually led to their ruin, thus in the papal apostasy some promoted tolerance of the new ideas coming into the Church. It is important to learn what should be tolerated and what should not, as the wrong type of tolerance will lead to ruin.

Revelation 2:16 “Repent; or else I will come unto you quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.”

Repent or I will come unto thee quickly - What is the Church to repent of? It is to repent of tolerating the teachings and practices of the Balamites and the Nicolaitanes. The Church is not to tolerate sin and apostasy in her midst, but how often has she allowed this to happen. Of this we must repent and reform.
It appears from the book itself that there had been already Churches for a considerable space of time in Asia; forasmuch as St. John, in the name of Christ, reproves faults that happen not but after a while. The Church of Ephesus had left her first love. That of Sardis had a name to live, but was dead. The Church of Laodicea was fallen into lukewarmness and indifference. But the Church of Ephesus, for instance, was not founded by St. Paul before the last years of Claudius. When in 61 or 62, St. Paul wrote to them from Rome, instead of reproving their want of love, he commends their love and faith, Eph 1:15. It appears from the Revelation that the Nicolaitans made a sect when this book was written, since they are expressly named; whereas they were only foretold and described in general terms by St. Peter, in his second epistle, written after the year 60, and in St. Jude, about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by Vespasian. It is evident from many places of the Revelation that there had been an open persecution in the provinces; St. John himself had been banished to the Isle of Patmos for the testimony of Jesus. The Church of Ephesus, or its bishops, is commended for their labour and patience, which seems to imply persecution. This is still more clear in the words directed to the Church of Smyrna, Re 2:9: I know thy works and tribulation. For the original word always denotes persecution in the scriptures of the New Testament, as it is also explained in the following verse. In the thirteenth verse of the same chapter mention is made of a martyr named Antipas, put to death at Pergamus. Though ancient ecclesiastical history gives us no information concerning this Antipas, it is nevertheless certain that, according to all the rules of language, what is here said must be understood literally.

In the message to the church at Ephesus, Christ is represented as holding the seven stars in His hand, and walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. He is represented as "walking" among them, thus illustrating His constant diligence in behalf of His church. He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. Nor does He become indifferent. These figures are to be carefully studied by the undershepherds, and faithfully applied to their own experience, that they may not lose sight of their great privilege of securing light from the Source of all light, and giving it in turn to those for whom they labor (Letter 4, 1908).

[Revelation 2:1-5 quoted.] The words fall from the lips of One who cannot lie. The picture reveals eternal vigilance. Christ is in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, walking from church to church, from congregation to congregation, from heart to heart. He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. If the candlesticks were left to the care of human beings, how often the light would flicker and go out! But God has not given His church into the hands of men. Christ, the One who gave His life for the world, that all who believe in Him may not perish but have everlasting life, is the watchman of the house. He is the warden, faithful and true, of the temple courts of the Lord. Christ walks in the midst of His churches through the length and breadth of the earth. He looks with intense interest to see whether His people are in such a condition spiritually that they can advance His kingdom. He is present in every assembly of the church. He knows those whose hearts He can fill with
the holy oil, that they may impart it to others. Those who faithfully carry forward the work of Christ, representing in word and deed the character of God, fulfill the Lord's purpose for them, and Christ takes pleasure in them (RH May 26, 1903).

Revelation 2:1-5 quoted.] In this scripture are outlined the conditions of acceptance with God. The first experience of the Ephesus church led to good works. God took delight in the fact that His church reflected the light of heaven by revealing the spirit of Christ in tenderness and compassion. The love that dwelt in the heart of Christ; the love that caused Him to give Himself a sacrifice for humanity, and to suffer with forbearance the reproach of men, even to the extent of being called a devil; the love that prompted Him to perform mighty works of healing during His ministry--this was the love that was to be revealed in the lives of His disciples. But they neglected to cherish Christ's compassion and tenderness. Self, as manifested in hereditary traits of character, spoiled the principles of the grand, good works that identified the members of the Ephesus church as Christians. The Lord Jesus must needs show them that they had lost that which was everything to them. The love that constrained the Saviour to die for us, was not revealed in its fullness in their lives; and hence they were unable to bring honor to the name of the Redeemer. And as they lost their first love, they increased in a knowledge of scientific theories originated by the father of lies (MS 11, 1906).

This message is an example of the way in which the ministers of God are to give reproof today. Following the commendation for earnest labor comes the reproof for losing the talent of love, which is a most sacred trust. It was the love of God that saved the fallen race from eternal death (MS 136, 1902).

Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." Thine is a decay, a declension in holy zeal--not forsaken is the object of it, but lost is the fervor. The first affection of the convert to Christ is deep, full, and ardent. It is not necessary that this love should become less as knowledge increases, as the more and increased light shines upon him. That love should become more fervent as he becomes better acquainted with his Lord. God will accept nothing less than the whole heart. Happy are they who from the commencement of their religious life have been true to their first love, growing in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. The sure result of their intercourse and fellowship with their beloved Lord will be to increase their piety, their purity, their fervor. They are receiving a divine education, and this is illustrated in a life of fervor, of diligence and zeal. It is our work to know our special failings and sins, which cause darkness and spiritual feebleness, and quenched our first love (RH June 7, 1887). {7BC 957.1}

In view of the many virtues enumerated, how striking is the charge brought against the church at Ephesus: "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." This church had been highly favored. It was planted by the apostle Paul. In the same city was the temple of
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Diana, which, in point of grandeur, was one of the marvels of the world. The Ephesian church met with great opposition, and some of the early Christians suffered persecution; and yet some of these very ones turned from the truths that had united them with Christ's followers, and adopted, in their stead, the specious errors devised by Satan. This change is represented as a spiritual fall. "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works"--as outlined in the preceding verses. The believers did not sense their spiritual fall. They knew not that a change had taken place in their hearts, and that they would have to repent because of the noncontinuance of their first works. But God in His mercy called for repentance, for a return to their first love and to the works that are always the result of true, Christlike love (MS 11, 1906).

Is it [our sin] the sin of the Nicolaitans, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness (RH June 7, 1887)?

The doctrine is now largely taught that the gospel of Christ has made the law of God of no effect; that by "believing" we are released from the necessity of being doers of the Word. But this is the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which Christ so unsparingly condemned (ST Jan. 2, 1912).

It is our work to know our special failings and sins, which cause darkness and spiritual feebleness, and quenched our first love. Is it worldliness? Is it selfishness? Is it the love of self-esteem? Is it striving to be first? Is it the sin of sensuality that is intensely active? Is it the sin of the Nicolaitans, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness? Is it the misuse and abuse of great light and opportunities and privileges, making boasted claims to wisdom and religious knowledge, while the life and character are inconsistent and immoral? Whatever it is that has been petted and cultivated until it has become strong and overmastering, make determined efforts to overcome, else you will be lost. --Review and Herald, June 7, 1887.

But the doctrine is now largely taught that the gospel of Christ has made the law of God of none effect; that by "believing" we are released from the necessity of being doers of the word. But this is the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which Christ so unsparingly condemned. To the church of Ephesus He says, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars; and hast borne, and hast patience, and for My name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember then from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate." {BEcho, February 8, 1897 par. 6}