

Revelation: Following Our Victorious King

[Revelation 2:1-7](#)

"A Letter From Jesus on Love"— January 21, 2024



Introduction

Being in a marital relationship with another person is a result of deep love. We are meant to have the same kind of relationship with God. Just as love of a spouse is more than merely having a marriage license, Christianity is more than just a ticket to heaven. Yet many Christians treat it just that way. Is Jesus ok with this? This passage answers this question for us.

The entire book of Revelation is a letter to be read in its entirety. Chapter 2 and 3 are letters to specific churches with a message from Jesus. The message was meant for a specific church, but all the churches would have seen the other letters. When we read these seven letters, we need to remember who is speaking. It is Jesus - the glorious, awesome, knee-knocking vision we saw in chapter one. We do well to sit up and listen careful to what Jesus is saying.

Each of the letters share a common pattern:

- Each letter begins with a recipient - "to the angel of the church..." The audience is clear - the churches.
- Each letter mentions something about Jesus that we saw from the glorious vision from chapter one.
- Each letter has Jesus' evaluation of the church - what is going well and what is not.
- Each letter offers encouragement and/or a call to repent.
- Each letter invites us to hear. "He who has ears to hear..."
- Each letter has a promise.

Each of the churches were under incredible pressure to conform to the world. They were tempted to mix scripture with what the world says to fit in. Would they succumb or would they conquer? How are you tempted to do the same at home, in our community, at work? How can we be conquerors or overcomers in a hostile world?

Sermon Outline

To become overcomers:

1. Hold fast to the truth. Vs. 1-3
2. Rekindle lost love. Vs. 4-7

Read & Discuss

1. Read vs. 1 – 3

Jesus has the right to give His assessment of the church. He knows what is going on in our life and in our church. Jesus praises the church in Ephesus for three things - their working, their testing, and their hating.

All the members of the church of Ephesus were **working hard**. People were serving in a variety of ways. They were not just hearers of the word - they were doers. When we work hard, it often goes unnoticed. That's hard, but Jesus sees. He is the one who matters.

The church of Ephesus was not a push-over. They **tested** things according to the truth. Their standard for testing was God's word. This is a challenge because the world doesn't recognize the Bible as the standard. The pressure affects different generations differently. This has been happening since the beginning. It happened in Genesis 3. Satan tries to get us to doubt God's word. ([Genesis 3:1](#)) Then he contradicts God's word and says that disobedience doesn't have consequences. (Genesis 3:4) Then he wants us to believe that God doesn't have our best interest in mind. ([Genesis 3:5](#)) If we exchange God's standard for our own, we are saying that we know better than God, and we don't trust Him to know what is best to help us flourish. In what ways do you feel the pressure to conform to the world and not God's standard? God's commands are given to us for life - "that it may go well with you." ([Deuteronomy 6:3](#)) Is the Bible your standard for right and wrong, truth and falsehood? When the Bible confronts you, how do you respond? God's word is truth, authoritative, sufficient!

The church in Ephesus **hated** the works of the Nicolaitans who seemed to be false teachers. They were involved in deeds that Jesus hated as did the church of Ephesus. Love comes with hate. Do we hate the things that Jesus hates? Do we love the things that He loves? If we are out of sync with Jesus, our standard may have conformed

to the world's way of thinking and not the Bible. But as important as having good theology is, it is not enough.

2. Read vs. 4 – 7

The church at Ephesus was theologically sound - they were committed to truth, but their heart had grown cold toward God and others. It is possible for us to be active in ministry, serving God and His people, loving good theology, only to end up falling in love with ministry itself or being noticed rather than loving the people to whom we are serving. ([1 Corinthians 13:2](#))

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 13 defines love. ([1 Corinthians 13:4-8](#)) It is one thing to love those who agree with us and who are nice to us, but what about people who drive you crazy? Do you love your enemies? Do you pray for those who persecute you? We can only love our enemy when we have a passionate love for God. The "love you once had" refers to the time when we first realized how sinful we are and how amazing God's grace is.

How do we know if we have lost our first love? Ask yourself: What do you talk about all week? Are you embarrassed to talk about Jesus? How do you spend your time and your money? We pay for what we value and spend time on what is important to us. ([Matthew 6:21](#))

Our relationship with God is not likened to a ticket to heaven. It is likened to a relationship between a husband and wife. God pursues us and wants to enter into a vibrant, personal, and intimate relationship with us. Are you often distracted, busy and preoccupied, keeping up external, religious activities? Has your love has grown cold? If this is true, what should we do? Remember, repent, and repeat!

Remember the gospel. Think about the character of God. Remember how deep the Father's love is for you. When we gather weekly, we remember the truth of God as He has revealed Himself. With the help of the Holy Spirit - those truths are glorious and our love for God is rekindled.

Then **repent**; change your mind. Jesus wants us to make up our mind - either Him or the world. He has something better for you! It involves changing commitments, reading the Bible, praying, coming to church each week. This may sound boring or cliché, but spiritual disciplines cultivate love.

Finally, **repeat**. How big of a deal is this? How urgent is this? Jesus warns at the end of [verse five](#). Jesus would shut down the church that does not love. How will the world know that we are His disciples? By love for each other. ([John 13:35](#); [1 John 4:7-12](#))

This is Jesus' letter to us. You are an individual Christian but part of a church. What do we do with Jesus' words? Think of Jesus' encouragement and warning as the rumble strips on the highway. They wake you up when you veer onto the shoulder. Hear, see, and respond. This is Jesus' loving call to something better. In responding to the call of Jesus, we find life. How will you respond today? Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life for all who repent and come to Him. ([John 14:6](#)) The overcomer is the weak, broken sinner who runs to God for help. It is the one who loves God much because they have been forgiven much.

Prayer of Response

1) After hearing God's Word, what sin do I need to *confess*? From what do I need to *repent*?

2) How should my life be lived this week based on what I have heard? What should I *understand*, *believe*, *desire*, or *do*?

Spend time praying together in response to God's word asking for His help and greater faith to follow Him in the week to come. If you missed the sermon on Sunday or would like to listen again, visit our website at fbcum.org

Next week's sermon text: we turn to Exodus 3 "Standing On Holy Ground"
