



October 12

Conquer Series: Careless Church

Revelation 2:1-7 (ESV)

2 “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. **2** “ ‘I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. **3** I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary. **4** But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. **5** Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. **6** Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. **7** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.’

To the angel of the church in Ephesus, write.

- We know more about this church than any other church in the New Testament.
- It’s beginning: Acts 19. Paul moves into Ephesus and starts teaching and doesn’t stop teaching every day for two years. The church in Ephesus is born.
- This church had some great names attached to it. Not only Paul, but Apollos, Timothy, and John. John was an Elder in the church at Ephesus.

- A great church, with great leaders. Even here in this letter Jesus commends the church.
- Jesus says to this church that he holds them in his right hand. What a wonderful assurance. Jesus has you in his right hand. He's holding you.
- The lamp stands are the churches. And Jesus is walking among them. It's an assurance that Jesus is with them. Jesus is present. Jesus is here. Jesus knows everything that's going on.

I know all that.

- In verses 2-3 we get some words that show us exactly what was going on. These stellar leaders in Ephesus have the church engaged in:
- Serving. Works means this church was busy.
- Sacrificing. The word toil means to "work to the point of exhaustion."
- Steadfast. They kept going even when things got tough.
- Separate. They were a church that refused to tolerate false teaching. They also refused false deeds.
- Suffering. These are people suffering because they wear the name of Jesus, but they're not about to take his name off their jersey.

Now, think about all that.

- If we were to talk about what the perfect church might look like, wouldn't we come up with a list that might look exactly like that one?
- Ephesus was a pretty perfect church from everything that we can tell is going on.
- And what does Jesus say? *I know about all that.*

•

Verse 4: "*But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.*"

- What does Jesus mean when he says, you've lost your first love?

First Love

- Maybe it's about love in general. They've stopped being a loving church. The problem with this is that Jesus speaks about not love in general...but your first love.
- Maybe the idea is that this is a church that's lost the love they had at the first? Do you remember what it was like to fall in love at the first? To fall in love with a sport, or a food, or a place, or a person. Remember the thrill at the first when you found that thing or person?
- I get the sentiment, but here's the truth. In a healthy relationship love deepens. And true love doesn't look backwards.
- Pay attention to what Jesus says: You've **abandoned** your first love. You've **forsaken** (NIV) your first love.
- In all their business the church in Ephesus had abandoned Jesus.

What do we learn? This: it is possible to be all about Jesus, without Jesus.

- What we do for the Lord is important. But more important is why we do it.

Jesus gives them the remedy. Here's the way you make sure your love is about Jesus and not anything else.

Remember.

- Remember the place from which you have fallen.
- There was a reason you needed Jesus in your life, and that reason has not changed.
- Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength. That's the first thing he asks of you. Love God first.

Repent.

- Repent just means to turn your life to Jesus. Repentance is not something we only do after some big moral failure. We repent everyday.
- Bernard of Clairvaux penned: *The heart is hard only when it does not know it is hard. A man is hardened only when he does not know he is hardened. When we are concerned about our coldness, it is because of the yearning God has put there.*
- If you have the desire to repent, it means you're on the right path.

Return.

- Verse 5. He says, *Do the things you did at first.*
- What is that? It can't be about doing things. Jesus has already pointed to all the things.
- Activity is not the problem so returning to some work that needs done is not the solution.
- What's the first thing you did to become a Christian? A: You accepted Jesus into your life.
- That's what you found at first. That's what you have to return to. Return to the gospel that saved you in the first place.
- Deep faithfulness comes not by doing more for Jesus, but by returning to the reason Jesus is in our lives at all.

Communion.

- Remember, Repent, and do the works you did at first. Right now, that means, Come to the table, and once again, acknowledge and accept the sacrifice of Jesus for you. And give thanks.

Jesus, we come to this table in repentance. You are here, meeting us at the table as we consider once again the cross you took for us. May our hearts be overwhelmed and broken with God's wonderful love for us that sent you there. We are grateful and changed. Jesus, we love you the most. Amen.

Invitation

- In every one of the seven letters there is a challenge with a promise.
- The promise is different in each letter, but the challenge is the same. It is to conquer.
- To the one who conquers...to the one who overcomes...to the one who endures. That's the challenge. To win. To have victory.
- The word for conquer/overcome is the Greek word for victory. And you know it well. I could say this...you wear it well. It's the word **nikay**.
- Jesus wants you to conquer. And as many people as can wear a swoosh on their shoes or shorts or shirts can be victorious spiritually.
- Conquerers are not spiritual elites. Conquerers are simply believers who have won by trusting in the work of Jesus. That's how you win.
- 1 John 5:4-5 (ESV) *4 For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*
- You win today if you have put Jesus on the throne of your heart. Have you won?
- Maybe you can say, *I'm a conquerer today!* There's a reward here for you.

Revelation 2:7 (ESV) **7** *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'*

- In sin we were banned from the tree of life. (Gen 3:22-24) But winning with Jesus means we get to go back to what we lost. In Christ we have abundant life eternally. (John 3:16; 10:10)
- Go with joy today knowing that.

God, we praise you and thank you for our church. A bunch of people who say the same thing: That Jesus is Lord and Savior and that Jesus wins! And because he wins, we win. Help us to hold on to what Jesus has done for us, and let it change us completely. Jesus, we love you the most. Amen.