



# Life Changing Words From God Week #6 Listen

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# So far . . . .

- Love
- Maranatha
- Persevere
- Pray
- Confess
- Listen

# Seven Churches, Seven Messages

- (7) real churches, (7) real situations, (7) real messages.
- Though His directives changed from church to church, there is a common theme; *Listen to the Spirit.*
- (7) times we will see these words repeated;
  - **To him who overcomes**
  - **He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says**

# Seven Churches, Seven Messages

- Could these be (7) different periods of *church history*?
- Could these simply be (7) different *conditions* that have been, and are, common to the church universal?
- Could these be (7) different *kinds of local churches* that seem to always be with us?
- The answer to all is, maybe. Tonight we will try to understand what was written to each of these 1<sup>st</sup> century churches and see how it might apply to us.

# ‘to Him who overcomes’

- 1 John 5:1-5 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. 4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. 5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? NKJV

# ‘to Him who overcomes’

- As usual, we see quickly that there is *no big mystery* to what is meant by ‘he who overcomes the world’. We overcome the world by faith.
- The distinction of ‘he who overcomes the world’ is simply there to screen out those who are pretenders to the faith.
- To ‘overcome’ something is to have a victory over, or to gain an upper hand, or to surpass; it is our faith that allows us to look at all of the allures of the world and choose against them.

# ‘he who has an ear’

- Since it is faith that allows us to be ‘overcomers’ then it makes perfect sense for the ‘ear’ to be mentioned.
- Rom 10:17; Faith comes by hearing, and by hearing of the word of God.
- We are overcomers because we heard and believed; now the Lord Jesus is asking each of the churches (and each of us) to continue listening.
- Once we are justified by faith we are to live by faith. (Hab 2:4 ‘the just shall live by faith’)

# ‘he who has an ear’

- I have to believe that the phrase ‘he who has an an ear’ has more to do with *our willingness to hear* than it does with *our ability to hear*.
- Our ability to hear (whether with an ear or some other means for the deaf) is never in doubt, but *our willingness to hear can rise and fall from one day or circumstance to the next*.
- Every moment of every day *we decide* to listen or ignore the voice of God.
- The lesson? Do all that you can to put yourself in a position to hear and then let God take it from there.

# Ephesus

## Correct, but cold.

- The church at Ephesus was correct;
  - They worked hard
  - They had patience
  - They had a holy hatred for evil
  - They were careful to ‘test the spirits’ and weed out imposters
  - They persevered in good works and did not ‘grow weary in well doing’

# Ephesus

## Correct, but cold.

- But, they left their first love and became cold and unwelcoming.
  - Great preaching, but no tolerance for the struggling
  - Sound doctrine, but too long on rules and too short on relationships
  - A stance against sin, but so forceful that it scared off sinners
  - Interested in serving God and Christians, but no time for those who did not fit their mold

# Smyrna

## The persecuted church.

- **One of just (2) of the (7) that are not told that Christ has something against them.**
- **They were dealing with;**
  - **Tribulation and poverty**
  - **Imposters in their ranks**
  - **Suffering, prison and death.**
- **Perhaps that was why they were so healthy?**

# Smyrna

## The persecuted church.

- **A lesson for us is that being righteous is no guaranty of protection from persecution.**
- **Interestingly enough, Jesus had no harsh words for them and surely the fact that they had no time to be ‘petty’ helped them to seek hard after God.**
- **No one wants to ask for persecution, but sometimes the Lord gives us what we need even if we didn’t ask for it.**
- **It is as simple as this; when are we more spiritual? When things are smooth or when they are rough?**

# Pergamum

One foot in the world.

- **The doctrine of Balaam is to try to corrupt what God will not curse.**
- **The way of Balaam (II Pet 2:15) is to do ‘religious’ work for personal gain. (just watch TV and listen to radio)**
- **The Nicolaitans? Scholars are divided on exactly what they taught, but not on the affect of their teaching; it drew people away from God.**

# Pergamum

One foot in the world.

- **They were not a total wipeout; Jesus does commend them, but by and large His message for them is biting.**
- **Don't draw the sheep into immorality.**
- **Don't draw the sheep into covetousness.**
- **Don't let teachings come in that weaken the flock.**

# Thyatira

## The church of too much tolerance.

- **Jesus had some very good things to say to them; they were working hard and getting better at it all the time.**
- **However, there was an immoral woman loose amongst the leadership of the church and no one was stepping up to correct her.**
- **We are called to love, but is it really love when we allow false doctrine, and loose living to go unchallenged?**
- **WWJD?**

# Thyatira

## The church of too much tolerance.

- **We harm the testimony of the church and cause of Christ when we tolerate sin in the church.**
- **The world may call this ‘judgmental’, but so be it because when we accept any sort of sinful behavior from our leaders we leaven the whole lump.**
- **We need to expect that sinners will act like sinners and, to a certain extent, tolerate their behavior. But we dare not settle for saints to act like sinners.**
- **Lost people come to us looking for godliness, not for more of what they get in the world.**

# Sardis

## The dead church

- **They had a good reputation in some circles as a ‘happening’ church, but Jesus sees them as dead.**
- **What can cause that?**
  - **Being busy, but not holy**
  - **Being loud, but not heard**
  - **Being known, but not effective**

# Sardis

## The dead church

- **They may have had swelling membership roles, but were cheating the audience of the truth.**
- **They may have had good programs, but no real power from God.**
- **They may have been entertaining, but not enlightening.**

# Philadelphia

## The occupying church.

- **Jesus expects that we will ‘occupy’ ‘til He comes. The church at Philadelphia was doing just that.**
- **There are no criticisms of them, but you can be sure that they were not perfect; they had people in their church.**
- **Two lofty accreditations; they kept His word and did not deny His name.**

# Philadelphia

## The occupying church.

- **How simple is that? They remained true to God's word and readily identified with Jesus.**
- **If that is what brings commendation from Jesus then the same is within our reach.**
- **It is easy to get distracted doing a million things while the main thing gets lost.**
- **The lesson? Be faithful in a few things and the Lord will make you ruler of many things.**

# Laodicea

## The church with no passion.

- **Laodicea's failings are all too well known; they were not hot and they were not cold. (yuk!)**
- **This church underscores the truth that you are either with Jesus or against Him .. There is no middle ground.**
- **It would have been best if they had been passionately for Jesus, but even passionately against Him would have been better than where they were.**

# Laodicea

## The church with no passion.

- **When people claim to know the Lord and then just sort of yawn about it, they send an ungodly message to the world; “we think we need Jesus, but we wish we didn’t”.**
- **The church at Laodicea would be loved by the secular world because they were making no ripples in the culture.**
- **For those who had some spiritual interest they were able to pacify them without changing them.**

# Laodicea

## The church with no passion.

- **They thought they had their lives together, but Jesus tells them they are unraveling.**
- **They thought they were rich and had no needs, but they were actually poor, blind, miserable, and naked.**
- **I can't help but think that the Laodicean church typifies the state of the church in America today more than any of the others.**

# Laodicea

The church with no passion.

- **He offers help, gold tried in the fire, white garments, and eye salve.**
- **The gold is genuine good works.**
- **The white garments is the righteousness of Christ.**
- **The eye salve is so that they can see their miserable condition so that they will want the gold and the white garments.**

# Laodicea

The church with no passion.

- **The greek word for ‘buy’ in verse 18, NT:59 agorazo (ag-or-ad'-zo); from NT:58; properly, to go to market, i.e. (by implication) to purchase; specially, to redeem:**
- **The idea is that this is not a casual impulse purchase, but an intentional one. Sort of like needing a prescription to get some special medicine.**

# Laodicea

## The church with no passion.

- **And then ..... He stands at the door and knocks. When we go to Jesus for help we find that He still makes house calls.**
- **The message to the Laodiceans was repent, I still love you. You are not what you should be, but there is still time if you will only let me doctor you up.**
- **In the 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish culture, when an offense was set right, a meal was shared and all was forgiven and forgotten.**

# Questions

