



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 1st 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 1st century Jewish culture, when an offense was set right, a meal was shared and all was forgiven and forgotten.**

Questions

