

The Church of Ephesus

The Seven Churches of Asia

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Bible Text: Revelation 2:1-7

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Revelations chapter two. Let's look at the things which are seen. Look at chapter two verse one. It says:

“Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.”¹

Now if you look back into chapter one and you will see that. Notice what it says.

Revelations chapter one and verse 12.

“And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks.”²

The idea of candlesticks is lamp stands, more like a candelabra, ok? It doesn't mean there is a single candlestick. It is candelabra is the idea of it.

“I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.”³

So, you see, in verse one of chapter two he writes something he saw in the vision. That is why I took you to chapter one, just to give you an example of it. He seen seven lamp stands and I should have wrote that on the board, but I can't draw too well. But all around Jesus, Jesus is in the middle, he is in the midst and all around him are these seven lamp stands. Jesus is right in the middle of it. Does everybody got that picture? That is what he sees in the vision. Ok?

¹ Revelation 2:1.

² Revelation 1:12.

³ Revelation 1:12-13.

Now, it says we need to interpret what the seven stars are. Now I am going to tell you something about the book of Revelations. Now listen to me real tight. The book of Revelations will tell you what the pictures mean. The best interpretation for the Bible is the Bible itself. Too many people go to the book of book of Revelation and they are, well, here is what I think that vision...

That is your first mistake. You let the Bible tell you what it pictures. That is why the book of Revelation is so hard for people and so confusing for people. The Bible will tell you what it pictures in the book of Revelations will tell you what it pictures. All through it, it will tell you what the pictures mean.

All right. Now let's get the... let's get the seven stars straightened out here first. He sees he that holds the seven stars in his right hand, of course, is Jesus. And he walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. All right. Let's look back up to chapter one and let's look at verse 20 and it will tell you what these two things are.

“The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.”⁴

Does everybody see it?

So the seven lamp stands are a picture of what? What does it tell you? It is a picture of the seven churches. Each church is like a lamp stand. Each church is like a candelabra.

You say, “Well, Jeff, is Elizabeth a lamp stand?”

It sure is. Every church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a lamp stand.

You say, “Well, why is it called a lamp stand?”

Think about it. It shines the light. That is what a church is supposed to do. It shines the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ and it shines the light of the teaching of the Word of God. That is what a church is supposed to be. It is to be a light house in a community that sounds out danger to those that are lost and salvation for those that need it so desperately. It is a lamp stand. It is a light house. That is why I picture it that way. I like that picture.

The church's job is to shine the light. What are we supposed to do here in Bancroft? We are to shine the light. We are to shine the gospel. We try to do that through the broadcast. We try to do that through the internet. But we try to do that locally by bringing in as many people as we can and we share with them the light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

Yes, my friend, we are a lamp stand. The church is supposed to shine the light to the world. That is one of our jobs. That is what we are supposed to do.

⁴ Revelation 1:20.

You say, “Well, who is... what is the angels of the seven churches?”

Now the word “angel” simply means, if you look it up, it simply means messenger. It simply means messenger. In the context you have got to determine what kind of messenger you are talking about. In a lot of places the word angel refers to a heavenly being that comes down from heaven and accomplishes certain things under the direction of the Lord. We read it [?] places. And you can read other places in Revelations where it refers to an angel.

But here this text he is sending the message, he is sending this message of Revelations, of the book of Revelations, he is sending this message to the seven churches and he is sending it to the messenger of each church. Who is the messenger of each church? What would you call that? You would call that the pastor, wouldn't you? If someone was sending a message to the church at Bancroft, who do you think they would send it to? They would send it to the messenger of the church and I am the messenger. I am the messenger. I am the messenger the Lord has placed here.

Now I work directly for Jesus Christ. I also work for you in a sense, but I am accountable to you also, you know. I mean, you can throw me out of here if you would like. That is the truth. If I do things that are... if I fall in to sin and I do things that are wrong, you need to get me out of here and you need to put somebody else up here. That is the truth.

So there is a sense that I am, indeed, accountable to you and you are accountable to [?].

But ultimately I answer to Jesus. He is the chief shepherd. I am an under shepherd. Oh, I love that 1 Peter chapter five. He is the chief shepherd. I am an under shepherd. You are his flock and I am just being set over it to feed you [?] things of that nature. Are you got it?

So the seven stars represent the seven messengers or the each pastor of the seven churches. Does everybody got it? The lamp stands represents the seven what? The seven churches. Seven stars represent the seven messengers of the seven churches, which are the pastors of the seven churches.

Do you know what I like a about ... do you know where Jesus has got his seven stars at? He has got them in his right hand. He is watching over them. He is holding them, you see. I like that.

Now ultimately it is true of all of God's sheep.

John 10 says that God's sheep, he says:

“And I give unto them eternal life.”⁵

⁵ John 10:28.

He says that they are in his hand and no one can pluck them out of his hand.

But here in this special attention is drawn to his pastors and they are in the hand of the Lord. The Lord keeps them. The Lord holds on to them and the Lord is with them. And if they need rebuke, the Lord will [?] and [?], too. While we are on that subject... So you remember that.

You have to be very careful how you come against the pastor. Be very careful about how you do that, because I mean you can read in the Old Testament when they come against God's man. It is a dangerous thing. So you need to respect the office. Represent the Lord so you need to respect him.

People are so disrespectful for the office today. You respect the office. It is a... one of the highest offices in the church. It is the highest office in the church and whoever is placed here needs to be who God places there. He needs to be who God places there. And God holds him and uses him according to his will.

Everybody got it?

All right.

Now let's move down into the... Does everybody see the things which he saw? Now let's look at things that are. Just takes me a little bit to get this thing developed, but it will be worthwhile by the time we are done. The things which are.

Look. Verse two says:

"I know thy works."⁶

I know what is going on there. That is what I like about that. God knows what the Church is doing. Jesus knows. Why does Jesus? He is right in the midst of it.

Well, you know what? Jesus is right in the midst of this service today. He says:

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."⁷

He is here. He is here where his Word is taught and he is watching you. He is watching you. He is here amongst us. And, boy, you want the Lord to come in.

Now there is one church here in Revelations where they have locked Jesus out of it. You know, who says, "I stand at the door, and knock."⁸

⁶ Revelation 2:2.

⁷ Matthew 18:20.

⁸ Revelation 3:20.

They had shut Jesus out. And he said, “If anybody there open the door I will come in and sup with you. I will come in and fellowship with you.”

But this church had shut Jesus out.

I am going to tell you something. You know you shut Jesus out? Throw this out. You can throw the book you, you shut Jesus out. And you can have more people if you entertain and tell jokes and carry on and all this stuff, but I want to tell you. The Holy Spirit works through the teaching of the book that he authored.

“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”⁹

Sanctification comes by the Word. Growth comes by the Word. We don't need nothing new. We need... we have the book. We have the Holy Spirit. We can open up and teach it and depend on the Lord to use it to save souls and it calls people to grow.

So Jesus in each one of these cases, in all seven of these churches when he comes down to the evaluation part he says, “I know your works. I know what is going on there.”

He knows what is going on here. And there is probably things that he loves here and there might be things that he don't like here. The only blessing of what they got is they knew exactly what was wrong. They knew exactly what was wrong, because Jesus told them what he saw and what he liked.

Well, let's go ahead and look what was good real fast. He says:

“I know thy works, and thy labour...”¹⁰

Now they labored. Twice it mentions they labored. Verse three said you have labored. And when you look down into verse three where it says:

“... for my name's sake hast laboured.”¹¹

The word “labored” there means to labor to the point of fatigue. In other words, they worked so hard, brother Mike, for the master in the master's name that they literally were physically wore out from it. I don't know if you have ever done that. It does... sometimes you get physically wore out from serving the Lord. It is a good way to be. It is a good way to be and they were. So they labored.

And it says they had patience. That means they endured. They never quit. A lot of people quit, man. It drives me crazy when people quit, doesn't it you? I have never been

⁹ Romans 10:17.

¹⁰ Revelation 2:2.

¹¹ Ibid.

able to handle that in 28 years. I love people that come and take a part and be a part, but it tears my soul out when people quit. It literally does.

You are not... you want to know one thing that once that will sideline a pastor more than anything else is that. It is that you have got to endure. You don't have no control over a lot of that, but these people had patience which means they endured. They never quit.

“Thou canst not bear them which are evil.”¹²

These people hated sin. They hated those that lived... they hated sin. They hated evil.

“Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.”¹³

This church was doctrinally sound, brother Ray. This was a good, sound doctrine church. How could it not have been?

The book of Ephesians, read the book of Ephesians. That was an epistle written to this church. They were solid. I think they were strong on grace, too. Had to be.

Wasn't it Ephesians that says?

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works...”¹⁴

I think it was a sovereign grace church, too, because of Ephesians one. I think this, brother Mike, was a solid church. I really do, doctrinally. I think they were solid doctrinally and I think they were laboring in the Lord's name. But, you see, when everything sounds good if you shut her down at verse three everything would have been great.

Let's read on.

It says:

“And hast borne, and hast patience.”¹⁵

There, again, we mentioned that.

Now when earlier I wanted to mention a little bit more about this. It says:

¹² Revelation 2:2.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ephesians 2:8-9.

¹⁵ Revelation 2:3.

“Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.”¹⁶

Paul in Acts 20 before he went to Jerusalem where he was arrested, the Ephesians elders came and visited Paul. Do you all remember that in Acts 20? And here is what Paul began to weep before them. He said:

“ For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you.”¹⁷

That is false teachers, false apostles and false prophets and they are not going to spare the flock. And Paul warned them of this. You know what? They evidently took that message to heart. So when a teacher would come and say they were apostle, they tried them. They tested them by the Scriptures and had found many to be liars. In order to test people you have got to know the Scriptures. So they had a knowledge of the Word of God and they took heed to what the apostle Paul had said. So they found them to be liars.

When he says, verse three they borne, it means that they held up. The implication is that they endured like the word patience, but the implication is that they went through persecution. And they held up under it.

Now you might not realize it unless you studied the book of Acts, but at Ephesus there was one of the seven wonders of the world there back in that day and time. It was a temple to the goddess Diana. It was a seat of false worship in Ephesus. It was a very immoral place. The goddess Diana worship was a very ungodly religion. They had temple prostitutes there and they were very immoral in their lifestyle. And so you can see how man would have loved that. And right in the midst of all of that mess the Lord set a lamp stand there. That is what the Lord will do.

You say, “Oh, we don’t want to put a church there. That is a rough area.”

A rough area needs a church. For crying out loud, that is where you need to set a church at. Set it right in a rough area where there is a lot of rough people at, because they need the light of the gospel the same as everybody else does.

We say it all the time and church isn’t a rest home for the saint. It is a hospital of the sick. Man, we want sinners to come in here. They are welcome here. We want as many to come in here. We want drunks to come in here. We want drug addicts to come in here. We want them all to come in here. We have got a message to tell [?]. I love to see people’s life change through the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is what we are all about.

You see, churches has stopped being that anymore. They ain’t nothing but country clubs, man. That is right. That is what they are. They are country clubs. They are trying to, you know, make money and trying to have just the elite and the rich in them. They don’t want

¹⁶ Revelation 2:2.

¹⁷ Acts 20:29.

anybody that can't bring any money to them. They don't want nobody that might have a bad reputation. Man, we do. By God's grace, we do. The Lord can change people's life.

Here is a church full of people whose lives have been changed by God's grace here today. We want other people like that. We don't ever want to get so uppity that we don't want sinners here. They come, you have got to make them feel welcome. Say, "We are glad you are here and we want unsaved people here."

So this church was solid doctrinally. And they went through persecution and the Lord set this lamp stand right in the midst of all this mess. And the church [?] to be pretty large because Acts 20 said they had elders. They had several pastors preaching. They probably had one main one, but they had a lot of different people that had to be involved to watch over that many people. So they were very active.

Verse four.

All right. That is the good part of the evaluation. Now here comes the bad part. Here comes the part the Lord didn't enjoy and didn't like. Notice what it says.

"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."¹⁸

Now that overwhelmed my heart when I read that. When you first read that you are like, "That ain't that big of a deal."

It is a big deal. It is a big deal. Does anybody in the house know who our first love is? Oh, come on now. Who is our first love? Our first love is Jesus. Our first love is Jesus.

Do you know who my first love is? Jesus. If you are saved today, your first love is Jesus. This church's first love must be Jesus. And a church can take Jesus instead of loving him preeminently, their love for Jesus can lessen. And it can still be doctrinally sound, too. It can still be doctrinally sound and then their love for Jesus and just absolutely not be what it should be.

You say, "Well, Jeff, that is not that bad."

It is a big deal and I am going to show you why. What is the greatest commandment? And I won't even turn you to it. What, according to the book of Matthew chapter 22, what is the greatest commandment? Does anybody in the house remember?

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."¹⁹

¹⁸ Revelation 2:4.

¹⁹ Matthew 22:37.

If that is the greatest commandment and you break it, that is a great sin, then, isn't it? It was so grievous of a sin that the Lord said, "If you don't repent of this, I am going to come there and I am going to take your lamp stand out.

What does that mean to take your lamp stand out? What does that mean to take your lamp stand? It had ceased to be a church.

I don't know if you went to Ephesus today, I assume the city is still there or something might be called by another name. I didn't get time to look that up. But this church ain't there no more.

You mean you can be doctrinally sound and cease to be a church because you don't love the Lord? Absolutely.

The motivating factor behind everything that we do here must be love for Jesus Christ. That must be what drives us. And if it don't, the light will go out. What is killing a lot of churches today? It is more than being doctrinally sound. Man, you have got to love Jesus. And you know what? If you love Jesus like you should, you will love people like you should. If you are off on Jesus, you will be off on people. It all hedges off that.

Does everybody see what I mean? The greatest commandment.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God."²⁰

What happened?

Folks, here is what this church was doing. They were doing the things. They were going through all the motions. They were doing through all the church duties and church practices, but they didn't love Jesus. They didn't love him. They weren't motivated by that. It was tradition. It is what dad and mom did and what this person did, but there was no passion for Christ. They lost it.

That is a serious offense in the eyes of Christ. A lot of God's people have done that. Man, they were passionate for Christ at one time, but now they are so cold and indifferent they don't care about the things of the Lord. What happened? They left their first love?

You have people loving Jesus, right, you won't have no trouble with anything else. This is an important issue with this church. You can see a church that is so solid and this one was. But their focus on Jesus was so distant that Jesus said, "I am going to come. I am going to remove your candlestick if you don't repent and go back and do your first works."

1 Corinthians 13. We know this text. I shouldn't have to turn you to it, but I am going to anyhow. I want to show you how important love is. I am talking about love for Jesus. You need to stay in love with the Lord. I want to preach because I love the Lord. If I am

²⁰ Ibid.

just preaching for people or if I am just preaching for your appreciation, you quit appreciating and I will quit preaching. But if I am preaching because I love Jesus, it don't matter what people does. I want to keep preaching.

If you are just serving because of people, then you are serving for the wrong reason. If you are just acting for the Lord because you want to please some man, then you are doing it for the wrong reason. You have got to be active and you have got to do what you do because you love Jesus Christ. That is the motive. There are all God's people said...

You need to get this straight because this is a priority. This is not a priority anymore. We don't stress this enough.

1 Corinthians 13. Here is how important love is to the Lord. The word "charity." I don't know why they translated it charity. Charity is a good word, but the Greek word is the Greek word *αγαπη* (ag-ah'-pay). We know what the word *αγαπη* (ag-ah'-pay) means. It is the highest form of love.

"For God so [*αγαπη* (ag-ah'-pay)] the world, that he gave his only begotten Son."²¹

It is the word *αγαπη* (ag-ah'-pay). It is the highest form of love you can use.

It says:

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."²²

This is splendid speech. If you have such good speech, if you are such a great speaker that people would say, man, it is just like the tongue of an angel. If you don't have love, you are just making a noise. That is what I am saying.

Love for who? That is exactly right. Get it straight.

"And though I have the gift of prophecy..."²³

This is superior knowledge. You have great knowledge. You have the gift of prophecy. You understand all mysteries. You have all knowledge.

"...and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."²⁴

²¹ John 3:16.

²² 1 Corinthians 13:1.

²³ 1 Corinthians 13:2.

²⁴ Ibid.

I don't care what you... here is what he is saying. I don't care what you know, how much you talk, how many degrees you have or all these things. If you don't... if it don't do these things because you love Jesus, what does it say? You are nothing.

And the Lord means what he is saying with this thing because when you first read Ephesians, too, you are like... [?] that don't sound that bad.

It does when you bring in 1 Corinthians 13 and it does when you bring in the greatest commandment.

The next, verse three, it talks about supreme sacrifice.

“And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.”²⁵

So without love for Christ whatever you do for the Lord is vain and empty, worthless and no good. And you are just going through the motions.

Our old football coach sometimes when he would get mad at us, which was often and he would get mad in there and he would, “Boys, you are just going through the motions.”

And many churches that is all they are doing. They are showing up just like [?] another Sunday. They are going through the motions of singing and they are going through the motions of doing all these things, but there is no motivation out of love for Jesus.

It has to be motivated [?].

Oh, we need to be doctrinally sound. I have always stood for that and I will continue to, but you also need to love Jesus with that. You can't leave that part out.

A lot of churches doctrinally sound are dying because they don't have no love in them. And you go there and it is colder than December. Oh, they have all the dogma. But they don't have no love for the Lord. They are cold and they are indifferent and they are not motivated by love.

Let's go back to our text. Everybody got it? It must be the motive for all that we do.

I said this before. I said at communion I think that is why the Lord gave communion it is to keep the church in love with Jesus. See, communion takes you back to Calvary every time you take it. It takes you right back to Calvary. It reminds you what Jesus did.

I am here because he shed his blood on Calvary. He is my Savior.

Here is what Jesus did for me. Constantly remembering, that is why the Lord gave that.

²⁵ 1 Corinthians 13:3.

I think God's people ought to take communion... I think that is one of the rights of churchy membership is to take communion.

This last communion we had we had more people attend than any other and it meant a lot to me, because I am telling you. It was killing me before. Well, we also... I didn't want to pastor a church of 50 percent of the membership came to communion. I didn't. And the last one gave me a lift like you would never believe. It gave me a lift like you will never believe. That is a special service for God's people. It must have great meaning to you. It is an honor service to recognize what Jesus did. That is how serious I take it.

I have been telling you I have been serious about it for years. But you don't realize how serious I am. That is the most important service in the service to me, because it is an honor service for what Jesus did for us.

So I think it keeps us in love with the Lord. I think it keeps us in love with him.

Let's move on. Let's move on.

What is the cure for? The church has left its first love. What is the cure? How do you get that love back where it needs to be? What do you have to do for that? Well, what does he say? Verse five.

“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do...”²⁶

What?

Go back and do your first works, Denver, is what he is saying. You know, I thought about that and then when I got tired of thinking about it I thought about it some more. I do that all the time.

You say, “What do you mean you do it?”

I do that when I do counseling. Sometimes I will counsel married couples. And do you know what? When I counsel married couples sometimes as I am counseling and I get me in all that is wrong and then I am bringing in Bible principles that try to help, you know. And when I look at all those things do you know what I figured out? They need to go back and do their first works, brother Ray. That is the only trouble.

Do you know what happens? Over a period of years the things that they did when they dated they stopped doing. The things they did when they dated they stopped doing.

Oh, they might.... they have a bigger house now and they labor and are working and they are enduring just like the church of Ephesus did, brother Mike. They are doing all the things. But do you know what they are not doing? They are not holding hands. They are not going on walks together. They are not going out on dates together. They are not

²⁶ Revelation 2:5.

spending no time with each other. They are not talking to each other. They are passing. And do you know what they need to do?

I said, “You need to go back and do what you did when you were dating. You need to go back and do your first walk. You loved her in the beginning. You loved him in the beginning. What did you do in the beginning that is different than you do?”

“Oh, we don’t ever talk. Oh, we don’t ever do this. Oh, we don’t ever do that.”

“Go back and do your first works.”

Same thing here.

Boy, I can remember when the Lord saved me. I remember. I wish I could remember it now. I [?] couldn’t get enough of his Word. I couldn’t get enough of his Word. I loved to spend time with him. I loved to... I couldn’t wait for the church door to open so I could come in and hear something else about him and sing to him and be with his people.

Do you remember that? Hey, do you remember that? See? And what happens over a period of time is that as the church gets kind of locked in to the same old, same old, you know? And then they drift and become brute... might things become routine. There is nothing there. Nothing there. And then you start moving everything out of routine.

Do you know what you need to do? Go back and do your first things. What did you do in the beginning? What would you do when you were first saved? What did you do when you were first saved? I guarantee you came to church. I can guarantee you were in his Word. I can guarantee you loved to be around his people. I can guarantee you spent time with the Lord and then over a period of time you stopped doing those things that kept you close. Do you see what I mean? That is what happens.

And then when you stopped doing those things it was just like a man and his wife. When you stopped doing those things that are needed to keep you close, do you know what happens? You drift and the relationship grows what? Tell me what it grows. Cold. Cold. This is just a spiritual application of that. You left your first love.

Oh, my, a church can leave its first love and the motivation behind what we do be wrong and the things we do are wrong. You have got to stay in love with the Lord. You have got to stay in love with him. You have got to go back and do the things you [?]

Everybody see it? A church can get cold, man. I pray that ours is not. I am just preaching. I am doing it... you know one thing about doing a text, you are just doing a text. That is what the text says. You are going to read this. I taught you just what the text said.

This was a problem at Ephesus. I don’t want it to be a problem here. I don’t want it to be a problem here. I don’t know whether it is or not. The Lord hasn’t sent me a message like

this. He give these... all seven messages and put them in the Bible so churches like ours can teach them and then we can glean from them things that we need.

Do you love the Lord today, folks? If you are here today and say do you love Jesus, do you love Jesus? Do you like to talk to him, to spend time with him and worship him? I pray that you do. I pray that you do.

Let's finish this.

We have seen the things that he saw, back to the vision, the things that are, the evaluation. He revealed what was bad, what was good and then what was bad.

The grievous offense what they did because he was going to remove their candlestick if they didn't repent of it, cease to be.

Now let's look at verse seven. Let's finish this.

“He that hath an ear...”²⁷

See...

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”²⁸

You see, you are encouraged to hear this message.

You say, “Well, that wasn't a very good message today.”

Not my message. It is the Lord's message. I just read you the text.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”²⁹

You read that in Revelation 22. You have a picture of the tree of life. Do you know what the tree of life is a picture of in Scripture? Eternal life. It is a picture of eternal life. Eternal life belongs to him that overcomes.

Turn 1 John chapter five, the last verse we will turn to. We are just about done.

1 John chapter five. What does it say in verse four?

²⁷ Revelation 2:7.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?³⁰

That is the only way you can overcome. The word “overcome.” Let me tell you what the word “overcome” means. The word “overcome” in 1 John five is the same word “overcome” that is used in Revelations two and three. Here is what it means. You can look it up in a Greek dictionary and it will tell you, “To gain the victory.” It is closely related to the word Nike which means what? Victor.

Do you know how you gain the victory?

“Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”³¹

That is the only way you can gain the victory. I have experienced a lot of great victories in sports over the years, but the greatest victory I have ever, ever been received, brother Ray, is the victory that I have in Jesus Christ.

We sing the song *Victory in Jesus*. Let me tell you what I have got victory over and I am going to ask you to receive it today. I have got victory over death. Oh, man, you just don't know. I thank God for that every day. I do so many services. In two years I have done 26 funeral services, brother Ray, in two years. And, you know, when I do those I think, oh, thank you, Jesus for victory. Thank you.

I may die. I might not come the next year, but I tell you what. When I die I am going to go be with Jesus. I have got victory over death, Matt. I am going to be with him when I pass.

Now can you say that? Can you say that? Some of you folks I don't know if you are saved or not. I want you to be saved. I want you to have this victory and I want you to have it today. The hardest thing in the world that ... and you want to know my hardest job? There are a lot of hard things about being a pastor, but someone talks about their loved one and they say, “Jeff, do you think they are ok [?]?”

And I have to look and say, “Well, I don't know. I don't know. I knew they knew, but they never said anything. They never came for baptism. You know, you can't baptize someone until they are saved. They never said nothing. I don't know.”

Man, when you can stand and you can say, “Hey.” This verse is [?] Christ and they had victory. Man it is just so... it is comforting to know that victory.

I have got victory over sin.

³⁰ 1 John 5:4-5.

³¹ 1 John 5:5.

When I was a little boy I was raised in this church. Did you all know that? I was raised here. I came to this church since what, mom? Eight days old. You might wonder why I love it so. I come here since I was eight days old. And not only... I mean, you can see the importance of being brought, of course, to God's house. We need to have this victory, this victory over death, this victory over sin. And these old preachers used to stand out here and they would pound that pulpit and they would preach on hell. That is how ... and it is old fashioned to preach on hell, isn't it? Outdated. It is too late to find out about hell after you are gone. It is [?]. It is the Scriptures. It is real. It is there.

And it was... they would scare me to death. I mean to tell you it would just raise the hair on my head and would just go home and weep at night and I would say, "I am scared of death of going to hell. I don't want to go to hell."

You know, I ain't worried a bit about that today. I know there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. I don't... I got victory over hell. I got victory over death. I got victory over sin.

Who is he that gains the victory but he that believeth that Jesus is the Messiah.

Would you like to see him today as your Savior?

Well, we looked at the things which are seen, things which are and the things which shall be hereafter.

Uncle Bill, I got a glorious hereafter. Anything here is all temporary anyhow. You need to have something today that money cannot buy and death cannot take away and that is Jesus and that is the victory that is in Jesus.

Do you ever wonder why we get excited when we sing, brother Mike? What do we sing? Victory, victory in Jesus. I want you to have it.

We will close with a word of prayer. Don't zip the Bibles up. I want your attention. I really do.

If you are here today and are lost, I want you to become an overcomer with me by receiving Jesus. The Bible says that whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. He can save you right there where you are at.

If you are here today and you have drifted in you love for the Lord, now you know whether you have or not. I don't... don't ask me. I just have ... this is something that only you can determine between you and Jesus. And if your love for the Lord is less, then your life will show it. You agree? Your life will show it.

So you might need to rededicate yourself to him. You might need to renew your dedication to him and how... go back and do your first works. Get back in the Lord's

house. Confess your sins to him. Get back into good fellowship with the Lord. Then your joy will come back and your service will come back once you do that.

Ok?

Let's all stand.