
The Church of Love (Restoring First Love)

Witnessing the Church of Jesus

Pastor Wil Nichols

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Victorious Praise Fellowship Church of God in Christ

2116 Page Rd. Durham NC 27703

WEBSITE: www.VictoriousPraise.org

EMAIL: PastorWil@VictoriousPraise.org, Info@VictoriousPraise.org

PHONE: (919) 957-7500

Sermon: Witnessing the Church of Jesus: The Church of Love (Restoring First Love)

Current Series (Witnessing the Works of Jesus) Messages:

- John 9: ***4 I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.***
- Subject: **The Blessings of Jesus** (Revelation, Impartation, Ordination)
- Subject: **The Healing of Jesus** (Wounds, Conditions, Fears of the Broken Heart)
- Subject: **The Deliverance of Jesus** (Cycle, Mind, and Control of Captivity)
- Subject: **The Sight of Jesus** (Perception, Inspection, and Vision of Sight)
- Subject: **The Liberty of Jesus** (Reformation vs. Regeneration, Confrontation vs. Inspiration, Oppression vs. Liberation)

Lesson Text

Matthew 16:13-19 (KJV)¹³When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, ***Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*** ¹⁴And they said, Some *say that thou art* John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. ¹⁵He saith unto them, ***But whom say ye that I am?*** ¹⁶And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. ¹⁷And Jesus answered and said unto him, ***Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*** ¹⁸And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Revelation 2:1-7 (KJV)¹Unto 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; ²I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: ³And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. ⁴Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. ⁵Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. ⁶But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷He 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.

Introduction

In our first lesson text we see the establishment of the Church with two objectives:

- A place of protection (“The gates of hell shall not prevail”)
- A place of power (“whatsoever you bind/lose on earth shall be bound/loosed in heaven”)

But by the time we get to the Book of Revelations, something has happened to the church.

Jesus first gives the church 7 commendations for their works of labor, patience, truth, judgement, and more; nevertheless, something is missing!

John 10:10 (AV)¹⁰ **The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly.**

The thief has come in and the church has lost its way; lost its protection and its power.

We have Charismatic Churches that are not Holy, Liberal Churches where everything goes; Seeker Friendly Churches that are Secular and Carnal, Prosperity Driven Churches that only seek money and wealth. As a result, the Church has lost its Power and Protection.

Jesus addresses several issues he has with his Church by addressing the Angels or Pastors of the 7 Churches in Asia, the first address we see here to the Church of Ephesus.

Revelation 2:4 (NLT)⁴ **But I have this complaint against you. You don't love me or each other as you did at first!**

We see a loss of love in relationships, friendships, workplaces, and marriages all the time; and the way they lose their love for each other is also how the church has lost its love.

Jesus responds to this first condition of the Church in the 5th verse:

Revelation 2:5 **Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works;**

We're doing church, having church, building mega churches, doing great church work, but something is missing; it is the Love of God!

We have churches, but we are not Christ centered; We have churches, but we are not connected.

Series and Sermon: Witnessing the Church of Jesus: The Church of Love (Restoring First Love)

Remembering, Returning, and Restoring First Love

I. Remember the Fall from First Love

Revelation 2: ⁴**Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.**

Why do we lose our love for people, places, and things? The major reason is because of an imperfect and inconsistent love that we possess.

The love that we as humans possess is EROS, a love based on human feelings, and PHILEO, a love based on human friendship. reciprocation.

This human based imperfect love only works when it is reciprocated, and it entirely contingent on human emotions. And as long as it is reciprocated, it will produce a phenomenally positive impact on us.

However, when we don't get back what you put it, or what we were expecting, then it will have a deleterious, harmful, toxic, and even damaging or injurious impact on our emotions.

And so, we leave! We leave our friendships, marriages, jobs, and even eventually our Churches!

But notice that the bible didn't say we "Lost our Love", it says we "Left our FIRST LOVE".

Revelation 2: ⁴Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

Although we can lose the human love of EROS and PHILEO, God's First Love (True Love, Best Love) is AGAPE. And It cannot be lost, it can only be left!

To get Love Back, We've got to Remember the Fall from First Love

Revelation 2: ⁵Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, ...

AGAPE love can't be lost because it's not based on the inconsistency, irregularity, changeability, and the unpredictability of the human emotions. It is based on the Will of God.

John 3:16 (KJV)¹⁶For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Romans 5:8 (KJV)⁸But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (The Message)⁴Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't want what it doesn't have. Love doesn't strut, Doesn't have a swelled head, ⁵Doesn't force itself on others, Isn't always "me first," Doesn't fly off the handle, Doesn't keep score of the sins of others, ⁶Doesn't revel when others grovel, Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, ⁷Puts up with anything, Trusts God always, Always looks for the best, Never looks back, But keeps going to the end.

We need to forget about how we feel, and remember what God did; forget about how people are, and remember who God is; forget about what's going on, remember what God promised.

1 John 4:8 (AV)⁸He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

II. Returning to the Grace of First Love

Revelation 2: ⁵Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works;

When people think of lost love, they think about how they feel or use to feel, and they focus on the fact that they don't feel that love anymore.

So since they don't feel it anymore, they think they must move on until they feel it with someone else or somewhere else.

- "I don't love him/her anymore", "I don't want to be here any longer"
- "We've grown apart", "It's not you, it's me", "I'm not growing any longer"

God never told us to find our emotions, to get that loving feeling back; he first said Remember, and then he said Repent!

The Word Repent here is from the Greek Word "Metanoeo" which means to change one's mind from sin and turn or return to God.

Revelation 2:5 (NLT)⁵Look how far you have fallen from your first love! Turn back to me again and work as you did at first.

To get Love Back, We've got to Return to the Grace of First Love

John 3:16 (AV)¹⁶For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Most people when they lose that loving feeling, that look to turning to someone, something, or someplace else to find love again.

But God is saying to us, don't worry about turning to something new to find love, Repent and Return to me. Remember who I am, remember what I've given you!

2 Chronicles 7:14 (KJV)¹⁴If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

We are looking for love in all the wrong places, when all we have to do is just turn to God.

III. Restoring the Power of First Love

Matthew 16: ¹⁸And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

In order for the Church to be an effective Witness to the Word, we need our First Love back:

- We've got to Remember the Fall from First Love
- We've got to Return to the Grace of First Love
- We've got to Restore the Power of First Love

First Love is the Agape Love that comes from God. It's not about how we feel, it's about remembering who God is. It's not about finding new love, it's about returning to God's Love. And it's not about the frustration of lost love, it's about the restoring the power of God's love.

The Church's power is not in how we feel, it's in how we Love!

The Church was built on the Power of God's Love, and it can't not fail:

Matthew 16: ¹⁸And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church;

The Church is protected by the Power of God's Love, and it can't not be defeated:

Matthew 16: ¹⁸... and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

The Church has access to the Kingdom of God from the Power of God's Love, and the Power of Heaven on Earth

Matthew 16: ¹⁹And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Midweek Study Lesson Plan (Sermon: The Church of Love (Restoring First Love))

Lesson Text

Matthew 16:13-19; Revelation 2:1-7

Sermon Outline

- I. Remember the Fall from First Love
- II. Returning to the Grace of First Love
- III. Restoring the Power of First Love

Questions

I. Getting to Know “Me”

1. How was love expressed in your family growing up?
2. If you had to do it all over again, how might you handle the breakup of a friendship, or intimate relationship from your past?

II. Into the Bible

1. In our lesson text, what are the “Keys to the Kingdom” referring to?
2. The phrase “whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” is stated by Jesus both in our lesson text, Matthew 16:19, and again in Matthew 18:18. What’s the difference?
3. What passages of scripture refer to or describe the three types of Love we talk about in this sermon (Eros, Phelio, and Agape)?

III. Life Application

1. In what ways can the church better apply God’s Agape Love?
2. In what ways can you personally better apply God’s Agape Love?