

Revelation 2:2-3

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/rev/rev-2/revelation-22-3/>

Jesus commends the Ephesians for standing up for the truth, for testing men who claim to be apostles and rejecting them for their false teachings.

After the greeting comes the commendation where the church is praised for the things they are doing right:

I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men (Revelation 2:2). Jesus commends three different positive traits.

- Jesus praises the *deeds* of the Ephesians. They are doing good works, following Jesus's commands, and walking in truth.
 - This is important, as the Word makes clear that Jesus will judge the deeds of believers, and they will be rewarded positively or negatively based on the deeds they have done while living on earth (2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:2).
- Jesus praises the diligence of the Ephesian believers. They are diligent to *toil* in working for the gospel. Further, they have been consistent in their diligence, exhibiting *perseverance* in walking in what is true and right.
- Third, Jesus praises the church in Ephesus for standing for what is true. Specifically, the church in Ephesus *cannot tolerate evil men*.
 - This implies that the Ephesians confronted evil, resisted evil, and put evil out of their midst. All of which Jesus commends.

These are all excellent traits, and Jesus applauds the church for their diligence and fidelity to standing for what is true. This includes putting potential teachers through a *test* to see if they are true to God's word and way. The Ephesian church had *put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false*. Jesus makes several things clear here that are instructive:

- It is right and good to *test* those considered leaders, to see if they are true or false.
- The Ephesians *put to the test* some people who called *themselves apostles*, which was commendable. Jesus commends them for evaluating, and discerning "true or false?"
- The Ephesians further found, correctly, that these self-proclaimed *apostles* were *false*, which Jesus commends.

The *cannot tolerate evil men* description implies that the Ephesians distanced themselves from the false apostles, and would have nothing to do with them, not allowing them to pollute their body of believers. Evil is not something God desires His people to tolerate. This is important to remember given that the Ephesian church is going to be chastised for misprioritizing its love. Confronting and opposing evil is a good and commendable thing.

It is good and commendable to stand for what is true and to test and hold accountable leaders to ensure they hold to what is true as well. These are all traits in which we should persist, relentlessly pursuing what is true and rejecting and opposing evil. These commendable actions stand as instructions for us and are also activities that we should pursue.

The *church in Ephesus* is sometimes referred to as the “loveless church” due to the exhortation Jesus gives them in verses 4-5 to repent and remember their first love. But this ignores the excellent job they are doing standing for the truth and preventing false teachers from polluting their community. It seems then, that perhaps a better title for the Ephesian church might be the “unbalanced church.” They are praised for standing up for what is true, including that *you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false.*

Many people who encounter false teachers accommodate them, putting “niceness” above standing for the truth. Jesus commends standing against what is false, which usually involves personal confrontation. He also congratulates the Ephesians for their *perseverance* in having *endured for His name’s sake*. The Ephesians have not given up on their allegiance to Christ. The world has always opposed Jesus and those who stand with Him. Other churches and believers have buckled and sided with the world to avoid suffering and persecution, but the Ephesians have held true to Jesus. They *have not grown weary* of siding with Christ.

So the *church in Ephesus* is singled out for their commitment to the truth. However, Jesus is full of both truth as well as love (2 John 1:3). Jesus always stood for what is true, and made plenty of people angry, ultimately resulting in Him being unjustly crucified. Jesus did not prioritize “being nice.” “Niceness” is arguably a vital attribute for cowardice, which this letter will condemn (Revelation 21:8). But Jesus always did what He did out of “agape” love. “Agape” love in Scripture is taking the best action for the benefit of others. Jesus came to serve, and served the best interest of those He served (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45).

The next section addresses the failure of the Ephesian church to make love of God their primary motivation, while continuing to stand for what is true and right.

Biblical Text

² **‘I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them *to be false*; ³ and you have perseverance and have endured for My name’s sake, and have not grown weary.**