

2017 National Ministries Conference
Calling for Revival
“The Concerns of the King”
Revelation 2–3
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Somewhere along the way my boss has learned that encouragement and a compliment can go a long way when you have a relationship and can commend someone with the next words helping them to better serve Christ and better succeed in ministry. It is easier to hear this from someone you know cares for you and recognizes the good work you’ve done. That is a great lead in to where we are going to be for this study. Jesus has looked at you and said ‘Hey I’m really glad you’re on the team but I have a few things I need to talk to you about, can you come in My office for a few minutes?’ He doesn’t do this to hurt you or because all of a sudden you have to earn His favor. He loves you and wants what is best for you. You are partnering with Him and His work for the Kingdom and He wants you to glorify Him and enjoy Him better.

So sweet words from people that love us mean so much! We can handle stronger words from those who love us and no one has ever loved us more than Jesus Christ. So in this study we are going to look at some tough words from Jesus Christ. Let’s start by looking at our text for this study from Revelation 2 and 3.

Revelation 2:4–5, 14–16a, 20–21, says *[4] But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. [5] Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.*

[14] But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. [15] So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. [16a] Therefore repent.

[20] But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. [21] I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality.

Revelation 3:1b–4, 15–22 says *[1b] “I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. [2] Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. [3] Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. [4] Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy.*

[15] “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! [16] So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. [17] For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. [18] I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. [19] Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. [20] Behold, I stand

at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. [21] The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. [22] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”

I have three points I want to make in this study – confrontation, the compassion and the choice. I have divided this up into five things that I think Jesus is confronting His church about. These are strong words from Jesus to His church for these are things He is concerned about. First, Jesus is concerned when His church is without internal passion. According to Revelation 2:4 and 5 the church at Ephesus has a solid Savior, a solid spirit and solid leadership. They have been pastored by Paul, Aquilla, Timothy and John. I’d say they have had some pretty good leaders in their church’s history. They have a solid history of 40 plus years by this time of works, toil and patient endurance and yet they are ones who have abandoned their first love.

I know of churches who have been founded by the Lord Jesus Christ and had the Holy Spirit blowing in its midst forward, backward, upward and downward, had its pleasure and been strong and that was partly due to having a solid history of solid leaders. So perhaps 40 plus years of doing work and laboring and it’s possible for such a solid church to have lost its first love. Let’s not just go institutional. It’s very possible for the man of God standing behind the pulpit to have lost his first love.

I will confess that I lose my first love all the time. I am guilty of diminishing my love for God. I am guilty of having a duplicitous love where I say ‘I love You God’ but I want to have an affair with some other thing on the side. I am guilty of having a deceptive love. As a pastor I have counselled and seen marriages where they would never think of divorce but they hate one another. On the outside they are ‘godly’ and beautiful because they are staying married but on the inside it’s horrible. If I let the diminishing, duplicitous, deceiving love go on then it’s just a dead love.

This is the illustration given to the church in Ephesus. I ask you was there a day when you loved Jesus with a hotter love? Have there been days you have wanted to come to worship more than you do now and you ask yourself how can I pray more and be more intimate in my prayer? Was there a day you wanted His wisdom so badly that you read His Word often? Was there a day you wanted to look so much like Him that you practiced godliness often? Was there a time you loved His family so much that you just wanted to pour yourself out to His family as much as you could for God and for His people? Was there a time when you understood that Jesus seeks and saves the lost that you busied yourself in evangelism, the making of disciples for Him? Ephesus was being confronted by Jesus Christ because they had lost their first love.

Secondly, Jesus is concerned when the church is without personal purity. In Revelation 2:14, 16, 20 and 21 there are two Old Testament illustrations are used in this concern. One is from Balaam and one is from Jezebel. They were people that taught the Israelites to engage in sexual sins and it appears in this vision of John’s that Balaam and Jezebel have reared their ugly heads again and they are back. There is 55 times that the word *porneia* meaning fornication, idolatry, is used in the New Testament and 19 of them are in the book of Revelation but it is also found all the way back to the first book of Genesis. Abraham and Hagar, Lot and his daughters, Judah and Tamar, Samson and Delilah, David and Bathsheba, Hosea and Gomer and these are just some illustrations of sexual sin in the Bible but sexual sin is everywhere and prevalent.

The world looks at Harvey Weinstein and says ‘isn’t that atrocious!’ but what Harvey does is practiced all across the land. It is practiced quite often in this church as men like me and ladies like you find ourselves lusting after anyone other than our spouse. God says that is not

what I designed you to do and I'm very concerned about it. There is trouble in Birmingham, Alabama just like there was trouble in Thyatira and Pergamum here in Revelation because our desires, words, and actions are unchaste but those are just acts of commission.

Because we love sexual purity we are to fight for those who are harmed and abused but because we have turned aside, not considering how to honor the sexuality intended by God by protecting the victims we are guilty of the sin of omission as well. God looks and says I'm troubled over your internal passion and your lack of passion for personal purity.

Thirdly, Jesus is concerned when His church is without doxological purity. It is a fancy word for the way we worship. Also in Revelation 2:14, 16, 20 and 21 there is some connection between the immorality and the eating of foods dedicated to idols. Paul is the one who said there was no such things as idols and we don't worry about this too much but when you are actually participating in a pagan worship ceremony that is a whole other matter. There has always been trouble in the Scripture as men will not worship God in the way that He has commanded to be worshipped. We see in Genesis where Cain struggled in this area and God did not like his sacrifice. Aaron was the one who oversaw the making of the golden calf. His sons, Nadab and Abihu somewhat followed suit when they offered strange fire. Saul was not the right one to offer sacrifices to God for he wasn't a priest. Throughout the Old Testament there is syncretism everywhere, where they take a little bit of God's worship and the world's worship and put them together.

In the New Testament there were the Pharisees who made much of their formalities but their hearts were so cold to where the house of prayer didn't even exist anymore. We see the Corinthians abuses in those letters and here we see it in Revelation. A. W. Tozer said 'It is not that the church is in the world rather the trouble comes from the fact that the world is in the church.' I don't have the time to go into the regulations of worship, of what we should do or shouldn't do and where we can be flexible but just know the Lord looks and says I am concerned about your doxological purity.

Fourthly, Jesus is concerned when His church is without institutional purity. In Revelation 2:14-16 there were some living in open, blatant sin and Christ doesn't like that. There were some who were tolerating those living in unrepentant sin. Jesus Christ is very concerned about.

Fifthly, Jesus is concerned when His church is without concern. Revelation 2:20-21 says *[20] But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. [21] I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality.* It is like God is looking at a wicked woman named Jezebel and saying 'repent, repent' but she is saying 'nope I'm not interested in that course.'

Revelation 3:15-18 says *[15] "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! [16] So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. [17] For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. [18] I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.*

Jesus is saying this is like a nauseous taste in His mouth that He just wants to spew out and then they say back to Him in return that they are rich, prosperous and need nothing. Do you understand what that means for a materialistic cultural that we live in like the United States?

God is saying ‘I don’t like the way you are worshipping Me’ and the people are saying ‘well, it’s working fine for us for we have health, wealth and prosperity. We need nothing.’ Then God says ‘don’t you know that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked.’ There are some who don’t repent because they think they have everything they need and this is the culture that we largely live in where we have health, wealth, prosperity, and jobs and when we don’t have those things we can go fix it pretty quickly somewhere. Jesus is looking and saying ‘I have a law, a will and I’m troubled when you are faithless, loveless, disobedient, impure, when your work ethic fails, when you don’t have orthodox intolerance and when you don’t persevere.

Where are we in this process? Jesus has now given us some tough but why? It is because of His compassion. Nothing has changed in the Gospel. Jesus Christ loves you. He chose you before the foundation of the world and recorded your name in His book. He then sent His Son and His Son agreed to come. His Son was humiliated for you, lived for you and died for you. He made promises to you and then sent Someone better than if He would have stuck around and that’s what He said regarding the Holy Spirit. He organizes His church and walks around you. He watches you and holds your leaders in His hands. He intercedes and works for you all the time. You do need to persevere but He perseveres you. He sanctifies, disciplines, disciplines, warms and warns you.

He commends you and confronts you. Why? Hebrews 12:5b–6 says [5b] *“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. [6] For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”* Something similar is said in Revelation 3:19, [19] *Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.*

Why does Jesus speak tough words to us? It is because we are His sons and daughters and He is crazy about us. He knows what is best for us and He wants what we want which is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. He uses words in Revelation 2 and 3 like ‘wake up, repent, obey, be blessed’ and so why would you experience church pain having your lampstand removed, or generational pain as your children suffer the consequences of your falling, for I love you so much, why won’t you repent? He does this because of His compassion and this leads me to the conclusion.

Now we have a choice to make. Proverbs 19:25 says [25] *Strike a scoffer, and the simple will learn prudence; reprove a man of understanding, and he will gain knowledge.* Some people just have to be beaten into submission. The scoffer is the irreverent, indecent, irresponsible and incorrigible one and all you can do is strike him until he dies or changes his behavior. He must be taught the hard way because he is the fool of the highest magnitude. Are you a scoffer? Must God drop the hammer in order for us to turn and live? Must He come like a thief? Must He strike our children? Must there be great tribulation? Must He war against us? Must He remove our lampstand?

No, not this day. Why? He loves us and we love Him. Revelation 3:20 says [20] *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.* All He wants us to do is to respond at the door when He knocks as He is calling you to repent. Some people only need the suggestion of wisdom. The man of understanding need only a verbal reproof, following this admonition; actions are adjusted but knowledge is gained. For them a word to the wise is sufficient. That is us today.

Who needs to repent? Why do we repent? It is because we have a relationship with the King of Kings. Who is there to help us repent? It is Jesus Christ, who died for us, who

intercedes for us and has been preaching to us, is ready for us, so what are we waiting for? Nothing! So here's how I would end this study. So let us end it in silence as you bow your head as you talk to your Savior because I am not your priest. He is your High Priest. He is here and He is ready to listen to you. We get to do the joy of repenting right now. At this time, please spend some time in prayer with your Savior.

Power Point

I. The Confrontation

- A. Jesus is concerned when his church is without internal passion (2:4–5)
- B. Jesus is concerned when his church is without personal purity (2:14–16, 20–21)
- C. Jesus is concerned when his church is without doxological purity (2:14–16, 20–21)
- D. Jesus is concerned when his church is without institutional purity (2:14–16)
- E. Jesus is concerned when his church is without concern (2:20; 3:15–17)

II. The Compassion (Rev. 3:19–22; Heb. 12:5–10)

III. The Choice

- A. Those slow to repent
- B. Those quick to repent (3:17–22)