**PREACHING NOTES: THE CHURCH THAT JESUS WANTS (REVELATION 2-3)**

**WEEK 3: REVELATION 2:12-3:3 (HATE)**

(Leon Mileham)

*“You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate”*

Revelation 2:6 NIV

The *Pulpit Commentary* on Revelation 2:6:

*“It is possible to hate what Jesus hates, but not love what he loves”.*

This commentary rings true flipped the other way round as well, that it is *possible to love what Jesus loves, but not hate what he hates*.

The things God hates often seem so contrary to the general worldview, especially in emotive areas:

e.g.

* The sanctity of life
* Marriage
* Sex
* Sexuality

These things are sacred and violations of them are sinful.

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**God hates sin, But loves sinners**

God hates the practices of the Nicolaitans, but we are not told he hates them;

Jonah was offended that God desired the people of Nineveh to repent (read Jonah 1-4)

Christians talk about issues – God’s concern is for people.

People are fragile. God’s heart is to restore and bring healing (see Isaiah 42:3).

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The mirror of God’s word tells us that all have sinned and fall short of glory of God (Romans 3:23).

**THE CROSS:** one limb speaks of God’s hate/judgment, but a second limb speaks of his love/mercy.

**The church Jesus wants is one that embraces what Jesus hates and what he loves.**

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The Church in Society:

We are called to take a stand for truth (to “contend for the faith” - Jude 3; *Game Changers* – “speak up”! See Proverbs 31:8-9)

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**THIS SERIES IS A MIRROR!**

The series, like the letters, is a mirror held up to the church/bride to show the church Jesus wants.

The church is what Jesus is building -  she is his hands, feet, heart, mouthpiece.

Jesus and his bride are one – he wants us to be like him.

**Are we willing to be a church that hates what Jesus hates, as well as loving what he loves, even when that is so unpopular - not just in society (through campaigns, petitions etc) but in the church itself?**

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**THE CHURCH AT PERGAMUM: COMPROMISE**

**Read Revelation 2:12-16**

Pergamum was a political centre; it was a seat of emperor worship in the Roman Empire; the Revelation letters were written during a time of extreme persecution (note, the martyr, Antipas).

They had been faithful under persecution (see verse 13), but they tolerated the teaching that was enticing people into the evil practices taught by Balaam and the Nicolaitans.

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**BALAAM:**

(See Numbers 22-25)

Balaam attempted to curse the Israelites, but failed. Eventually he succeeded by seducing them into evil practices through compromise (see Numbers 25:1-3).

The Pergamum church were seduced into compromise in the same way through sex.

[Note: The time between the events of Balaam’s time and the recording of Revelation was around 1500 years – Revelation was written down around 95 AD]

Devil:

Pergamum: the city where *“Satan has his throne”*

We are in a spiritual war (Read Ephesians 6:10-20). **The devil hates the church that Jesus wants and he will do anything to destroy it.**

Satan could not lead the Pergamum church into sin through persecution, but they were led to compromise in an area of vulnerability.

Don’t compromise, even in small ways; don’t let the “little foxes” in (see Ephesians 5:3/Song of Songs 2:15). We are called to be set apart for the Lord.

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**NICOLAITANS:**

They were a Christian sect who believed their spiritual liberty put them beyond sin and gave them a licence to sin. Some believed their teaching and were teaching it to the church.

*Grace* is the means by which we are saved, through faith. It is a gift which cannot be earned. It is the means by which we are able to live free from sin (see Romans 6:1-2, 7).

A possible “Nicolaitan-type” attitude might be:

*What is sinful for me doesn’t count – I am under grace, loved by Jesus; as long as I love what God loves and essentially am a good person, it’s fine – I AM FREE!*

Do not dabble with it/tolerate it/trivialise it /spiritualise it.

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**In the church:**

* Take responsibility for your spiritual life;
* Test out the things you hear/are taught (see Joshua 1:7-8);
* Help one another - accountability;
* Church leaders need to take action and bring correction where necessary.

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**THE CHURCH AT SARDIS: DEAD INSIDE**

**Read Revelation 3:1-3**

Jesus hates falsehood, fakes and hypocrisy.

Sardis had a reputation of being wealthy and successful. But Jesus considered them dead! (He actually has nothing good to say about them!). They were concerned about the outside, but Jesus looks at the heart (see Samuel 16:7; Matthew 23:27).

Jesus says he finds their deeds incomplete.

Acts 2:42-47 - gives a picture of the deeds that matter to him:

* Being devoted to God/each other/family
* Care for the poor
* Telling people about Jesus
* Making disciples

**Ananias and Sapphira: read Acts 5:1-11.**

The believers were selling their property to meet the needs of all the people (see Acts 4:32). Ananias & Sapphira sold a property. They agreed to give some of the money, keep some back, but give the impression they had given in the whole amount.

In Acts 5:4 Peter says that the money amounts were theirs to do as they wished (there was no law or requirement about selling possessions and giving the proceeds away).

The judgment on them both was death.

**We must be genuine and authentic. God sees the heart and will judge the heart.**

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*Keep your word even when it hurts (Psalm 15:4)*

*Let your yes be yes and your no, no (Matt 5:37)*

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Sardis’s solution was to “wake up and strengthen what remains”

Something remains. They were encouraged to hold on to what they had received and heard from God.

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Every letter ends “to him who overcomes ...”

The same power that raised Christ from dead is at work in us! (see Ephesians 1:19)

**For all of these things we need the Holy Spirit.**

We need the “sevenfold Spirit” – the seven aspects vital for being the overcoming church that Jesus wants:

**Read Isaiah 11:1-3a**

The Spirit of:

* Wisdom
* Understanding
* Counsel
* Might
* Knowledge
* Fear of the Lord \*
* Delight in the fear of the Lord.

\*The “fear of the Lord” is reverence for and submission to Jesus – in all things he should have the supremacy (see Colossians 1:8).

The Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him (Luke 11:13).