

Becoming a Church that
Pleases Jesus
(Jesus' Report Card)

Revelation 2-3

Introduction

Jesus has amazing plans and expectations for His church. The people of God have incredible potential made available by the death and resurrection of Jesus, the truth of God's Word, and the power of His Spirit.

He has designed us to advance His kingdom on the earth and has prophesied that the gates of hell will not be able to stop us! (Matthew 16:18-19)

We want to be this kind of church! We want to walk in all that Jesus has made available for us. We want to be a pleasure to our Lord and serve Him effectively.

Introduction

In the 2nd and 3rd chapters of Revelation, we are blessed to witness Jesus' evaluation of the New Testament church. Basically Jesus gives the church a report card, declaring many things that they are doing well and correcting some things that need to be changed.

For the next several weeks, we will be reading Jesus' words about the church - His Bride that He loves. This will be a great opportunity to encourage ourselves to continue in the things He commended and repent of the things that He corrected. In doing so, we will become a church that pleases Him and serves Him well.

Revelation 2:8-11

1. I Know Your Afflictions

- “afflictions” - Greek (thlipsis) = pressure, anguish, burden, persecution, trouble, tribulation (Strong’s)
- The people of God are not exempt from afflictions. All of us will experience troubles, pressures, burdens, and anguish in this temporary life. That is not negotiable.
- The question is; how will these afflictions affect us? Will satan gain ground through our afflictions because we surrender to self pity, depression, doubt, and bitterness toward God and life?
- Or will God be glorified in them because we are purified by fire and become warriors tested on the battle field?

1. I Know Your Afflictions

- “I know your afflictions.” The Savior and Deliverer knows every single burden that you bear! And He says, “Come to me, you who are heavy burdened and I will give you rest for your weary souls.” (Matthew 11:28)
- The people of God need to stop perceiving trouble as a tribulation, and see every hardship as an opportunity to draw nearer to Christ, to put the hurt on satan, and to give God glory before the people He has given us.
- Jesus’ challenge to the afflicted is to “Be faithful” (v.10) and to “overcome.” (v.11) Jesus has promised to use every hardship for good to those that love Him and are faithful to Him. (Romans 8:28) Are you being overcome by your troubles or will you be an overcomer for Christ?

2. I Know Your Poverty

- “I know your afflictions and your poverty - yet you are rich!” Revelation 2:9
- There may be some here today that are experiencing poverty on various levels. To those, Jesus gives this encouragement and challenge - “I know your poverty... be faithful.”
- The One who provides all things intimately knows the struggles you are going through. Our responsibility in times of lack are to trust God, believe His promises, and be faithful with the little that we have. Jesus promised that faithfulness in little will be rewarded. (Matt 25:23)

2. I Know Your Poverty

- When finances are extremely thin, satan tempts us to become depressed whiners, focussed on every penny, and we become consumed with ourselves. **But we are overcomers!** We choose to praise God right through our poverty and find joy in our testing, knowing that we will be prepared to steward His kingdom in the future.
- For those of who who are not struggling with poverty, but are enjoying wealth; let us be reminded of our true focus - His kingdom and His righteousness.
- Let's read 1 Timothy 6:18-19. Jesus said that the poor are rich! Is this because they are free from the distractions and entanglements of riches? Where are you?

3. I Know the Slander

- Let's read 1 Peter 3:8-17 together.
- The church of Smyrna was being slandered (evil speaking) by those who claimed to be the people of God but in reality were not.
- In our journey with God, there will be “Christians” and “religious” people who attempt to hurt us or discourage us with their words. If Jesus endured it, how can we expect any less as His followers?
- Our responsibility is to leave the justification and retribution to God, draw closer to Him, and faithfully pray for those who slander us. Let's read Matthew 5:11.

3. I Know the Slander

- And let us be reminded of the power and responsibility of our words. May we be people who build up rather than tear down - especially within the church of Jesus.
- “But I tell you that men will have to give an account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. By your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.” Matthew 12:36-37
- “But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.” Colossians 3:8
- How are you doing with your speech?

The Challenge

- I find it amazing that Jesus had no rebuke for this church because they had been tested and purified by the hardships that they were going through.
- The Bible tells us to actually be thankful and praise God for the trials we endure because they mature us and make us more like Jesus.
- Instead of a rebuke, Jesus challenged them **to be faithful** and **to overcome**. What a challenge for us!
- Will you be faithfully devoted to God through your trials? Will you commit to overcome every obstacle through the power of Jesus and His authority in you? He has given us everything we need to be victorious!