

Revelation 3

Sunday 11/4/2007

SEC: Introduction and Vision for the Church

Go ahead and turn to the book of Revelation chapter 3. We are going to use this as a jumping-off point. Ray, you could not have sung a more perfect song based on what I want to talk about today. In thinking about what I would preach this morning, I got thinking about basically just that very thing: how great God is, how great He is to us, and how great He has been to us as a church with the teaching and the preaching that we have the blessing to be under.

Think back at all the things that He has done over the last couple of years, the things that Bob has brought us through. We talk about how we went over the seven judgments and the seven laws, the seven baptisms, and the seven things that changed about us the day we got saved. A year or two ago, we spent time going through and learning from the Bible about how to build a biblical marriage so that we as couples can make sure that we are the right team that we need to be, so that we can then turn and minister for God effectively. Bob understood that he needed to lay that out for us because if we were not going to get our marriages where they needed to be, then our church is never going to be as strong as it needs to be. We are never going to be able to do all of the things that we need to get done.

Over the summer, we were able to have such a great day on our anniversary Sunday where we installed our first deacons. I think about the responsibility that that entails. What I want to ask you today, what I want to be able to talk to you about today, is basically just a kind of issue, just a little bit of a challenge to you. This church is on the verge of some really great things. If you look around and you look at the people that are in this room, and you look at how God has brought everybody together, and you look at how it has grown up to this point. As the letter Jamie from down in Mississippi wrote, she heard about this opportunity that we have to possibly get a new building that God is going to provide for us.

We do not know right now whether we are going to get that building or not. We know that God is going to give it to us if He wants us to have it. So there is a great peace in that, right? There is a great peace in being able to go through and not worry about something like that, to know that if it is what God wants, then we are going to have it. I believe that this building is not what He wants for us, and He has got something else for us because this church is ready to pop. If you look around at the people that we have in here, all the different aspects and the different facets and all of the different things that everybody brings to the table, there are a lot of things that God can do with us.

But we have to make sure that we are where we need to be on an individual basis, on a daily basis, in order to accomplish that, because Bob cannot do it all by himself. Bob can get up here. He can preach the Bible better than anybody that I have ever heard before. He can teach the Bible better than anybody that I have ever heard before. But it is up to us to decide if we are going to do anything with it or not. It is up to us to make the decision on whether we are going to really get involved and take a part in this ministry, or if we are just going to come on Sunday morning and we are just going to come on Thursday night, and we are going to do that week

after week, month after month, year after year, and never really get involved and never really accomplish anything for God.

So I have three simple points that I want to challenge you on today:

1. We need to answer the door.
2. We need to answer the call.
3. We better be ready to answer the bell.

SEC: Answering the Door: A Personal Relationship with God

Let us get into it here. Revelation chapter 3, as I said, this is our jumping-off point. I am just going to read here starting in verse 14.

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

We all know that we are living in the middle of the Laodicean church period. We know from what we have been taught that these are the end times and that we are living right smack dab in the middle of the worst period in church history, period. It is so terrible that literally we make God puke. That is not something that I am really proud of. We like to talk about how we want to be Philadelphian Christians in the Laodicean church age. We want to be a Philadelphian church in the Laodicean church age. But I wonder if we really are. I wonder if we really take the steps necessary to be able to do that. We can say it. We can say we are going to be Philadelphian Christians. But if you pay attention to what He writes here, that is what Laodicea says.

What do they say in verse 17?

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

And in verse 20 He says,

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock:

You look at all of the periods of church history, this is the only one where God is standing on the outside knocking on the door trying to get in. There are churches all over the world today that think that God is right there with them. They think God is in everything that they are doing, but He is standing on the outside knocking on the door trying to get in. The exact same thing can happen to us. The exact same thing can happen to us in our church if we do not answer the door. We have got to answer the door. We have got to understand that first and foremost, on an individual basis, God wants to have a relationship with us.

He says,

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

It is amazing to me in our society today how infatuated we are with fame and famous people. Jamie is terrible about this. She absolutely is enamored with famous people of any kind. It could be for any reason. She and Barb used to go up to training camp, up to River Falls, for about a week at a time. She was in hog heaven. She was up there with all the Chiefs players and there were news reporters. She made best friends with the camera guy from Channel 41 News and she would brag about it. We would be at some event and she would say, "Look at that. I know that guy, look at that guy, the guy." I would say, "Who are you talking about?" She would say, "That guy right there." I would say, "That is great. That is the coolest thing I have ever heard." She knows the camera guy, Channel 41. They were actually personal friends with Marcus Allen when he was here in town. I think that is pretty cool. So I will throw myself under the bus along with her that I am just the same.

We just get completely infatuated with famous people, and they are just people. They are athletes, they are TV personalities, they are actors, whatever it may be. But we would all get so excited if we knew one of them, right? If we were friends with one of them, like that really meant something. That is how our society is, and we play right into it. We buy into it just like all the rest of them. The amazing thing is that we have God, we have God Almighty, Jesus Christ, the person that had the ability to literally speak the universe into existence. He wants to have a personal relationship with us, and it is no big deal. We are more interested in trying to be friends with who knows what. God Himself wants to come in and have a personal relationship with us. But we have got to answer the door. We are never going to accomplish anything for God until we get our personal relationship with Him where it needs to be.

You say, "Well, we already know that." Of course you do. Bob preaches it all the time. But the Bible says repetition is the price of learning. The bottom line is, if we do not make a choice on a daily basis to get involved and make sure that that relationship is where it needs to be, then it is going to fall apart. It is the absolute quintessential fundamental thing for our ministry for Him, is to make sure that our relationship with Him is right.

So three things here really quickly about that relationship. Three things absolutely vital to any relationship, any husband and wife relationship, relationship with any of your friends, with your children. Obviously they apply to our relationship with God. If we do not have these three things in line, then we are never going to have that relationship where we need to have it.

- Communication
- Honesty
- Trust

SEC: Answering the Call: Being Soldiers for Christ

Once we answer the door and we get that relationship where it needs to be, and we get that focus where it needs to be, the second thing is we need to answer the call.

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

So we are called to His purpose. What purpose is that? We know that in the grand scheme of things, the theme of the Bible is a kingdom. We know that God is trying to establish a kingdom, but in our finite little part of this plan that God has, in the world that we live in, in the part that we play, what is that purpose that we are called to?

For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

We are in the business of getting people saved. That is it. That is the bottom line. That is all we are here to do. We are here to serve Him, to glorify Him, and to help get people saved, which someday down the road is going to help populate that kingdom. That is the part that we play, and we lose sight of that sometimes. Sometimes we get so busy doing ministry that we forget what the purpose of the ministry is that we are doing. We get so busy being big time. We get so busy becoming self-important, feeling good about who we are and where we are and whatever political position that we have been able to get for ourselves in the church, that we forget that at the end of the day we are here to help get people saved.

But it is a battle. The Bible says we are also called to be soldiers.

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

Turn over to 1 Chronicles chapter 12. This is one of my favorite passages. 1 Chronicles chapter 12. What is going on here basically is Saul has died, and the armies are coming to David to make him king. But I want to look at some characteristics of these armies. These are things that if we are going to answer the call of God, if we are going to be the kind of soldiers that we need to be, we better get these things down. We better answer the door first. We better get our relationship where it needs to be. But then we better look at these things, and we better get these things down.

1 Chronicles chapter 12, start reading in verse 23.

And these are the numbers of the bands that were ready armed to the war, and came to David to Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the LORD.

The children of Judah that bare shield and spear were six thousand and eight hundred, ready armed to the war.

And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment.

Of Zebulun, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, with all instruments of war, fifty thousand, which could keep rank: they were not of double heart.

And of Naphtali a thousand captains, and with them with shield and spear thirty and seven thousand.

And of the Danites that could order the battle, twenty and eight thousand and six hundred.

And of Asher, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, forty thousand.

And on the other side of Jordan, of the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and of the half tribe of Manasseh, with all manner of instruments of war for the battle, an hundred and twenty thousand.

All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel: and all the rest also of Israel were of one heart to make David king.

So I see a few things when I look in this passage. I see a few things that oftentimes are lacking in our lives, but they are things that are going to be absolutely vital if we are going to truly accomplish the mission that God has laid out before us.

- Ready Armed to the War (Preparation)
- Understanding of the Times (Urgency)
- Expert in War with All Instruments of War (Skillful Use of the Word)
- Could Keep Rank (Following Chain of Command)
- Perfect Heart (Unity of Purpose)

SEC: Answering the Bell: Facing Spiritual Warfare

We talked about answering the door. We talked about how we need to get that relationship right with Him. We talked about answering the call, how it is a call to be in an army. An army has a job to do, and we are here to get people saved and do whatever God wants us to do in that. I promise you, if you answer the door and you answer that call, you better be ready to answer the bell because the devil is going to attack you. The devil is going to come after you to try to stop you. He is going to come after this church to try to stop us if we are really serious about serving Him.

When the devil attacks you, he is going to attack you purposefully. Simply put, and you guys know this, the whole story of the Bible is a story of God moving in a direction to try to accomplish something and the devil moving in opposition to try to derail what God is trying to do. So he does that on a global sense, but he does that in each of our lives as well. God is moving in a certain direction in our life. He has a certain plan that he wants us to fulfill, so you better believe that the devil is going to spend every minute that he can to try to stop you from serving God and to try to stop you from fulfilling that plan. We know that before you get saved, before you accept Christ as your Savior, the devil does everything that he can do to try to keep you from getting saved, but after you get saved, he tries to do everything that he can do to keep you from serving Him.

Go back again to the example I used earlier with Israel. When the devil had them in Egypt, he had them right where he wanted them. His whole mission was to keep them out of the Promised Land. But he was getting ready for someday if they were ever going to get out of Egypt, which, I mean, he knows the Bible, so he knew that they were. So he littered the whole land, the space between Egypt and the Promised Land, with other nations, and he put them there to stop them from getting where they needed to go. He littered it with obstacles, and he does the same thing with us spiritually in our own lives after we get saved. There are going to be obstacles in our way that he is going to place there to try to keep us from getting where we need to get.

Not only is he going to attack you purposefully, he is going to attack you precisely.

Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

We know that God's word is precise. Let me know that God's word can shoot you right through the heart from a thousand yards in high wind. The devil is going to attack you the same way. The devil has got his fiery darts that he is going to shoot at you. He knows how to get you. He knows exactly where. He knows exactly when, and he knows exactly how to strike at you. Whatever area is your weakness, maybe it is pride. Maybe it is fear, jealousy, patience. Maybe it is your friends. Maybe it is drugs, alcohol, whatever it may be that is an area of weakness for you. I promise you that is what the devil is going to try to exploit. So that is where it comes back to one of our first points where we talk about getting honest with ourselves, getting honest with God about where we really are. Because we have to constantly evaluate ourselves and what our strengths are, what our weaknesses are, and we have to know what they are so that we can defend ourselves against those attacks.

The third thing about the way he is going to attack, he is going to do it persistently.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

He is always there. We watch the Discovery Channel, we watch how lions hunt. They hide out there in the grass, they will hide forever until their prey comes along. I have got to tell you guys a story. This is a funny story. This is a good analogy for the principle. When Jamie and I first got married, we lived in an apartment about five or six blocks from Bob and Barb's house just

around the corner from Raytown South High School. We loved that apartment. We had fun times. It was great. Our first Christmas, I decided that we had a real wood burning fireplace in the apartment, which is kind of cool. Because most apartments nowadays, you just get the gas fireplace, you just flip a switch. It is not very romantic, right? It is not very manly to go over and be like, "Ugh, I am going to go start a fire. Hold on a second. Click."

So, real wood burning fireplace. I was like, "Yeah, I am going to light a fire." I was a boy scout, so I know how to light a fire. I spent a couple years. I went on camping trips. I know how the thing works. I am Mr. Smooth. You guys remember, I told the story at Valentine's Day, so you guys know how suave that I was and am. So, I go down and we are going to have a fire, right? Ironically enough, I did not have a pile of firewood in the back of the apartment building, so I went down to like Quick Trip or someplace, I do not know, and I bought one of those bundles of firewood. Now, what the thing should have said on it, it should have had a note that said, "Hey, dummy, you should have bought this a year ago if you want to burn this today, because this just got chopped a couple weeks ago and it has not seasoned and it is not dry enough and it is not going to burn." But it did not have a note like that on it. It had a note that said "firewood." So I bought it and I am on my way home. "Woo! We are going to have a romantic night. This is going to be great."

So we go and I get it all. I got the papers, I am curling them all up, sticking them in there and I am lighting them. These logs are not catching on fire. This is not good. Already my manhood is shrinking and shriveling. I am not feeling as good about myself as I was before. But it is okay. It is not dire yet. She has not lost all faith in me because the fireplace had a gas light on it, right? So you know, you take a little thing in there, you turn it on and you light that up. So now I got a little blowtorch that is blowing out of the bottom of the fireplace. I was like, "This is going to work. She will forgive me for having to use this. It will be fine. As long as I get it going." So I got that thing going. Now the logs are really burning. I was like, "I am pretty impressed." So everything is good. We are going to go get on the couch and we are going to cuddle and I am going to woo her and tell her how much I love her. She is going to be thinking about how great I am. It is just wonderful. It is just perfect.

So I turned the gas off and about five minutes later, the fire is gone. The stupid logs stopped burning. So we tried that, we tried that a couple of different times and I could not get the thing going. So finally, she is asleep on the couch. She is giving up. I wake her up. I tell her to go to bed and I sit for a little while longer and this fire is gone. The log is dead. It is not even smoldering. So I have got to go to bed now, but it is December, right? So it is like 15 degrees outside. Again, since I was already having a night where I was showing my vast intelligence, I decided the, what is the little thing on the inside of the fireplace that you open and close? The flu thing. I was like, "Well, this is a, I mean, I cannot just leave that thing open tonight because we are going to lose all our heat. And then our gas bill is going to be astronomical." So I am like, "At least I can salvage tonight because I will save us money. I am going to be smart and I am going to close the flu before I go to bed."

So I do that. I go to bed and I am having sweet dreams. Next thing I know, two o'clock in the morning, Jamie is yelling at me from the doorway of our bedroom to wake up. I wake up and

basically here is what happened. She wakes up out of bed. She has got to go to the bathroom. She gets up and she is like, she cannot really see anything. She says, she is doing the eye rubbing thing. So it is okay. It is one o'clock. It is early. So it is just hard to see. Well, she rubbed her eyes enough. She figured out that, okay, it is not my eyes. There is a cloud of smoke in this entire apartment and I cannot see where I am going. So she wakes me up. She is yelling at me. At some point in the middle of the night, there was something in the middle of that log that was still a little bit on fire and it sparked up again. Mr. Wizard here who closed the flu caused the entire apartment to fill up with smoke. So then two o'clock in the morning, we have got every window. It is 15 degrees outside. We have got every window open and I am standing at the front door in my underwear waving the door, waving the door, trying to get the smoke to clear out. Then knowing that man, I already knew I was in trouble, but our apartment was going to smell like a stinging campfire for like the next month, which it did.

Look guys, that is what the devil is like. I went to sleep on that log because I did not see any burning flame. I did not see any embers. I did not see any smoke coming out of it. I thought everything was fine. I went to sleep on it. Next thing I know, two hours later, I have got an apartment full of smoke and I have got a big issue I have got to deal with. That is why it says, "Be sober, be vigilant." You cannot afford to go to sleep because the devil does not sleep. If you are going to do anything for God, He is going to be there all the time, even if you cannot see Him. He is working behind the scenes and that thing is going to spark up on you. The second you fall asleep, you are going to have a life full of smoke and you are going to have a big issue you have got to deal with.

The other thing I think about when I think about the devil attacking, you look back down through time and you look at the price that people paid for the Bible that we have. You look at all the other periods in church history and people paid a price for what they believe and people suffered persecution.

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Let us be real about it, all right? Let us please not call some of the stuff that we go through persecution. It is an absolute disrespect and disservice to the men and women that lived down through time that really suffered persecution for Christ's sake. The scariest thing that I think, the scariest thing that I have ever heard Bob teach or preach was on a Thursday night Bible study, I do not know, a year ago or two maybe. He pointed something out that kept me up that night and anytime I try not to think about it because anytime I do it keeps me up. I never really realized it, I had never seen it, I had never really thought about it. But he said if you go back and you study through church history, every single period in church history the people that were serving Him and that lived in that day and age paid a price for what they believed in. Every single one except the Laodicean church period. We are the only ones that have not paid anything. We are the only ones that have not made any kind of real sacrifice for what we believe.

I do not know if you realize what that means but that is terrifying to me because that means one of two things. It means either I am going to get to the judgment seat of Christ someday and I am going to have to stare at all those men and women that burned at the stake, they watched their

wives or their husbands and their children killed because they would not deny Christ, they would not deny that Bible. And I am going to have to pretend like what I went through, which is what? Somebody at work making fun of me for reading my Bible on my break, somebody at school giving me a hard time reading a Bible thumper. I am going to have to try to equate that. Come on. Or it means this, and this is the scary one, it means that our time is coming. It means that there is going to come a day, possibly before the rapture happens, when we are going to get our chance to do a little bit of suffering like Christ did for us and like all these other men and women did down through the ages. What did that verse say? "Yea, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." So we better take stock, we better decide how serious we really are about this. Because we may have a day someday where we are going to have to cough up and we are going to have to pay a price like everybody else did.

SEC: Answering to the King: The Judgment Seat of Christ

I have got one last point I want to make and we are going to wrap up. But I basically said all that to say this. If you are a Christian today, you better answer the door, you better get your relationship set where it needs to be. You better do that on a daily basis. God talks about renewing of your mind day by day. You better answer that door and then you better answer the call. If you answer the door and you answer the call, you better answer the bell because the devil is going to come after you. We better answer the door and we better answer the call and we better answer the bell because someday, someday soon, we are going to answer to the King. We are going to give an account for the lives that we lived, the things that we did, and maybe the things that we did not do.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

We are going to give an account someday for our lives, whether we served Him or whether we did not serve Him. Ray talked about it earlier. We are going to have an opportunity to get crowns, hopefully, if we do not lose them based on how we served Him, based on the things that we did. We know based on what the Bible says that there is going to be a time that we are going to be able to take those crowns and give them back to the Lord. We are going to be able to say, "Hey, Lord, I do not deserve this. I did not do anything special. You are the one, You are the one that came down and lived a perfect life. You are the one that was willing to come down out of heaven, walk around for 33 and a half years as a man on this filthy, sin-filled earth, and then hang up on the cross and pay my eternal sin debt so that I might have the free gift of eternal life and avoid what I deserve, which is to spend all of eternity in hell and in the lake of fire. So You take this back, Lord. You take it back."

But what a tragedy. What a tragedy for some of us that we are going to stand before Him someday. As that song goes, "Crown Him with many crowns," the verse that talks about "rich wounds yet visible." We are going to look at those scars in His hands and in His feet. We are going to say, "I got nothing for You, God. I am sorry. Thanks for everything that You did. I was

still more interested in doing my own thing. I was still more interested in worrying about how many friends I had, worrying about what I had going on on Friday and Saturday night, worrying about not being made fun of, worrying about being cool. I had other things going on, God. So I am sorry, but I do not have anything to give back to You."

For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

There is coming a day where we are going to answer to the King and we are going to give an account for what we did on this earth. As I said all the way back at the very beginning, this church is on the verge, can be on the verge of some great things. We do not know what is on the horizon, but if you think back, you guys that were here when we started out with 30 people, and in a few short years you look at where we are now. You can only imagine where we might be in three or four more years if God carries. But it is going to be up to us. God cannot do it by Himself. Like I said at the very beginning, we have to make a decision as a church, we have to make a decision as individuals within this church that it is not going to be good enough just to come to church on Sunday mornings and on Thursday nights and just go through the motions. We have to be serious about it. We have to answer that call that He has given to us and we have to get into that book and find out what it is that God wants us to do and then we do it with everything that we have in us. Because we are going to answer for it someday and it is someday soon. It is someday soon.

Let us pray. Our Father, Lord, again, I just...