

“When Love Went Wild!”

(Rev. 2:18-29)

Dr. Richard S. Koole
Chapel Pointe
May 13, 2007

(combine with next sermon)

I. Introduction

A. The Need For Balance

1. Riding a bicycle
 - Watching Anne Marie
 - My fear
 - Run alongside
 - Learn balance and never forget
2. The “Balanced Diet”
 - Protein
 - Carbohydrates
 - Fats
 - Cholesterol
 - Fiber
 - Calcium
3. Raising children
 - Too much discipline
 - Too little discipline

4. The Church

a. Ephesus

1. Too much attention to doctrine
2. Not enough to love

b. Let's meet the flipside in Thyatira

1. Too much emphasis on love
2. Not enough on doctrine

c. We see both in churches today

- In the north county
- Lack balance
- Keep falling

d. I see it in individual Christians

1. Lack balance
2. Keep falling
3. Imbalance between love and doctrine

II. Review

A. Lessons from Seven Letters

1. Seven congregations in Asia Minor
2. From Apostle John
3. Application to—
 - a. The 1st century church to which it was addressed
 - b. Churches of all ages
 - c. Individuals today

d. Prophetic of church eras

B. Largest Letter to the “Least Important” City

1. Ephesus

a. Problem

- Great doctrine but had lost love
- Much of fundamentalism today
- True of many Christians today

b. Era

- The Apostolic Era
- Ended with the death of John the Apostle (96 AD)

2. Smyrna

a. The Suffering Church

1. No criticism given
2. Pure!
3. Like churches in some countries today
4. Also true of some Christians

b. An era

1. From 94 AD – 312 AD
2. From Domitian → Diocletian
3. Worst suffering to date

3. Pergamos

a. The compromised church

1. They had “married the world”
2. Added to doctrine
3. Many churches like that today
 - Mainline denominations
4. Many Christians like that

b. An era

1. Constantine’s vision 312 AD
2. Edict of Toleration
3. Church and state married
4. From 312 → 600 AD

4. Thyatira

a. Love without doctrine / Bible

1. Added all kinds of junk
2. True of groups today
 - Let emotions rule
 - Christian TV
3. Also true of many Christians

b. An era

1. 600 AD → 1500 AD
2. Will see later

III. Text

A. The Author

1. Jesus Christ
2. His description – “The Son of God”
 - a. Used when His Deity is stressed
 - b. Son of Man – His humanity
3. Son of God
 - a. Righteousness
 - b. Judgment
 - c. God!
4. “Eyes like a flame of fire”
 - a. Piercing and penetrating
 - b. Unstoppable
 - c. Discerner of sin
5. “Feet of fine brass”
 - a. Copper and zinc alloy
 - b. Judgment!
 - c. Stamps out all who oppose Him
6. Are you starting to get the picture?
 - a. Jesus is not happy with this church
 - b. Sense the righteous wrath of God
 - c. Wants them to know with whom they are dealing.

B. The Congregation

1. Thyatira
2. The “Pagan Church”

3. Location of Thyatira

- a. Halfway between Pergamos and Sardis
- b. In a valley
- c. Very little cultural importance
 - 1. An outpost of Pergamos (the capitol of the region)
 - 2. Used by military to slow down those raiding Pergamos
 - *a military “speed bump”
 - 3. Was being constantly overrun

4. Chief Industry

- a. Lydia (Acts 16)
 - 1. First European convert
 - 2. In Macedonia on business
 - 3. She was a “seller of purple”
- b. Thyatiran purple
 - 1. From the *madder root* which grew near there
 - 2. From the *murex shellfish*
 - a. The best purple
 - b. A tiny shellfish near the town
 - c. Could only extract a tiny droplet from the throat of the shellfish
 - d. Extremely valuable
 - 1. Dyed wool

2. Man would have to work three years as a laborer to be able to afford one pound

3. No record of the formation of the church

a. No record of Paul visiting

b. Many believe Lydia started it when she returned from Macedonia

4. A church of great virtue and great vice

C. The Commendation

1. “I know your works”

a. Jesus sees what you do

b. “I know!”

c. Their virtues are great!

1. LOVE

a. God is Love

b. We are to be defined as LOVING people

c. Contrasted with Ephesus’—“watchdog” mentality

d. Most churches could learn a lot about love

e. Loving churches grow

f. Even if error is prevalent!

g. People want to be loved

2. Service

a. They were out serving Jesus

b. Service is a result of love

1. Never force service

2. It has to be built on love

3. That's why parents sacrifice for their kids –
LOVE them

c. Service without love is always—

1. Shallow

2. Temporary

3. Coerced

3. Faith

a. They trusted God

b. The result of faith is patience

4. Patience

a. Waited upon the Lord

b. Faith

2. These are great works

a. Include—
—love—service—faith—patience

b. These people worked to get the job done

c. They loved God and those around them

d. Yet they were out of balance, and fell!

3. Many churches today are wobbly on doctrine yet strong on love and emotion

4. Are experiencing great growth!

a. The Assemblies of God

b. 31 of the 50 states (fastest growing)

- c. 40 of the 50 are charismatic = LOVE
5. God does bless that type of love, service, faith and patience
6. What they have done→
- a. Opened up the Roman Catholics to the Gospel
 - b. Opened up “mainline” Protestant denominations
 - c. Brought sophistication to Christian music
 - d. Established a beachhead in TV industry
 - e. Exploded the Gospel in the Foreign Mission Field
 - South Korea
 - Dead Orthodoxy is powerless to reach the lost
 - *LOVE* is the catalyst
 - f. Reached lost through neighborhood Bible studies
 - g. Brought excitement back into worship services

Trouble in Charismatic Movement

NEW YORK (RNS)—Two civil suits have been filed against the leader of a 2,500 member church group in a Seattle suburb that has been plagued in the past year with two suicides, the drowning of a 5-year-old girl, and alleged incidents of sexual abuse of women and teenagers. Donald lee Barnett is the leader of the Community Chapel in Burien, Washington.

David Wilkerson, the Assemblies of God pastor who founded the Teen Challenge organization that rehabilitates drug addicts and prostitutes, said in a newspaper interview that the developments at the Community Chapel constitute “the worst error that’s ever come into the charismatic movement.”

Barnett, 56, founded the group as a small basement Bible study in 1967. It has grown into a \$10-million complex that includes a Bible college with about 800 students, and it has started 12 satellite churches in the United States and Canada.

As the church expanded, Barnett’s teachings grew more unconventional. In 1983, he claimed to have had a “vision,” in which he experienced things that no human had ever before experienced.

“The Lord promised to give me truth that he has not given to man before,” the pastor told his followers.

In 1984, the pastor introduced a practice called “dancing before the Lord” as part of every worship service. It began as solo dancing and evolved into dancing with members of the opposite sex. According to a report in *Christianity Today* magazine, Barnett claimed at an

elder's retreat last year to have had a "mystical encounter with a dancing angel." He later announced from the pulpit that "special private dancing lessons would be conducted for those desiring this new level of spiritual experience."

As the teachings and religious practice progressed from unconventional to bizarre, the church began to experience serious problems both among members and with the law.

Community Chapel gained a good deal of unfavorable media attention last year. Former members claimed that many of Barnett's followers were getting divorced because of experiences during the dancing sessions with people other than their spouses. Some asserted that Barnett threatened to disfellowship any members who criticized him, and that he accused his critics of demon possession.

Barnett has refused to be interviewed by the news media or to answer questions about the charges. Loren Krenelka, a spokesperson for Community Chapel, said, "We feel it is best not to comment to the press, because in the past we have been quoted out of context and misrepresented."

David Wilkerson says Barnett's teaching of finding "spiritual connections" through dancing has been a major factor in the chapel's problems. Wilkerson, who now heads an organization called World Challenge in Lindale, Texas, told the Seattle Times that "this doctrine is going to move like a poison through the entire charismatic movement unless it's stopped right away, because it appeals to adultery, and anyone who has had an adulterous thought."

Wilkerson also expressed concern at Barnett's refusal to talk to the media. "If the man has nothing to hide," he said, "then let him come out and talk to you. If he can prove that these things people are saying are not true, then he deserves a public apology."

7. Their problem?

- a. Have placed experience over the Commandments of God— the Bible
- b. That is a "slippery" road to walk down
- c. Tend to be "way up" or "way down"
 - Depends on emotions
- d. Examples?
 1. Abuse of spiritual gifts
 2. Female leadership
 - Rev. Sharon, etc.
 3. Lack of mature male leadership
 4. True of many cults

5. Failure to discipline erring members

- Lowering the standards

8. Our Goal?

a. The Church with charisma!

b. With—

1. Excitement

2. Service

3. LOVE

4. Faith

5. Patience

c. Without—

1. Doctrinal abuses

2. Instability!

D. The Concern

1. “Nevertheless, I have a few things against you”

a. Oops!

b. All is not well

2. Their three basic problems

a. They had a woman leading the church

b. They had sexual immorality in the church

c. They had slipped across the line toward idols & idolatry

3. Wow!

- How could this happen?!

4. Answer—usually a church’s (or individual’s) greatest virtues are the areas of greatest vulnerability

5. When love becomes accommodation

- a. Always thinks the best of people
- b. Can’t believe they meant to do wrong
- c. “Come on –give them another chance”
- d. “I know they don’t agree doctrinally, but let’s let them teach a class
 - We don’t want to hurt their feelings
- e. It’ll cause a big ruckus if we use church discipline on them

6. Love confronts sin

a. The love of Jonathan Edwards

1. Pat Robertson’s book—“*America’s Dates with Destiny*”

2. The white, wood-framed Congregational meetinghouse in Enfield, Connecticut, was jammed with farmers, merchants, visiting clergymen, and frontier families. From eyewitness accounts of that Sunday morning worship service on July 8, 1741, we get a fascinating picture of the great spiritual awakening that swept the American colonies in the eighteenth century.

The congregation probably sang at least two traditional hymns with seven or eight verses each. Long passages from the Old Testament, the Gospels, and the Epistles were read. An offering was taken. Totally unprepared for what was about to happen, dozing parishioners had to be awakened after the pastoral prayer by an usher carrying a long pole with a feather used to tickle the slumbering sinner.

But everything changed the moment the guest preacher stood, walked quickly to the pulpit, opened his Bible, and looked out across the congregation. He was just thirty-six years old, tall and wiry. He wore a black robe with a stiffly starched collar. His powdered wig framed a long forehead, a rather prominent nose, a small mouth with tight lips, and deep-set, dark blue eyes.

For a moment he stood in silence, slowly scanning the faces in the congregation. Then he opened his Bible, straightened his notes, leaned down onto the pulpit, and began to speak in a calm, resonant voice: “The wrath of God is like great waters that are dammed for the present. They increase more and more and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given; and the longer the stream is stopped, the more rapid and mighty is its course, when once it is let loose.”

If the congregation had been dozing, it was suddenly wide-awake. The listeners lived in a world of man, but the Reverend Jonathan Edwards was opening up another world to them, the

world of God. And that world of heaven and hell, angels and demons, judgment and mercy was as real to him as the fields and farms of Enfield were to the farmers and their families in the pews.

One eyewitness described Jonathan Edwards's words that day as "a most awakening sermon." And he added, "Before the sermon was done—there was a great moaning and crying out through ye whole House."

Many historians claim that Edwards was the greatest preacher of his age. Yet he wasn't fiery and animated like so many television preachers today. His voice didn't shake the meeting house in great, pear-shaped tones. His arms didn't gesture wildly. He didn't pace or perform. One biographer says he simply leaned on the pulpit, stared at a distant point in the meetinghouse and spoke quietly of God's wrath and judgment.

"If God should withdraw his hand from the floodgate," he said quietly, "it would immediately fly open, and the fiery floods of the fierceness and wrath of God would rush forth with inconceivable fury... Thus are all of you that never passed under a great change of heart by the mighty power of the Spirit of God upon your souls; all that were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin to a state of new and before altogether unexperienced light and life."

"O sinner," his voice echoed over the congregation's growing concern, "consider the fearful danger you are in... And let everyone that is yet out of Christ and hanging over the pit of hell, whether they be old men and women or middle-aged or young people or little children, now hearken to the loud calls of God's word and providence."

A witness reported that even as Edwards preached, members of the congregation "yelled and shrieked, they rolled in the aisles, they crowded up into the pulpit and begged him to stop." Another commented that after the sermon, one "waited with the deepest and most solemn solicitude to hear the trumpet sound... and was deeply disappointed, when the day terminated, and left the world in its usual state of tranquillity."

"Therefore," Edwards concluded his Enfield sermon that day, "let everyone that is out of Christ now awake and fly from the wrath to come."

3. Not a popular theme

- a. Yet love will preach it
- b. Today's preachers of love—have lost BALANCE—

7. The problem

a. An unqualified leader

1. The place of women in the ministry

a. Includes

- Prophetesses

- Judges
 - Great workers
- b. Yet, for church leadership we have I Timothy 3
 - c. These women failed to qualify

2. Why?

- a. She was a she
 - A result of Lydia?
 - Elders—pastors = males
 - 1 Cor. = “Let women keep quiet in church!”

8. Problems

- a. Unqualified leadership
 - Most common cause of church failure
- b. Sex and the saints
- c. Idolatry

9. Next Week:

- a. Plus the era from AD 600 → AD 1500
- b. 900 years of Thyatira churches
- c. The development of heresies

IV. Summary

A. The Loving Church

1. God loves it
2. Danger?

- Lack discipline and doctrine
- Out of balance
- Vulnerable to—
 - emotions
 - charlatans
 - Satan

B. The Individual

1. Seek after *LOVE*
2. Only good source of service
3. Seek faith and patience
4. These are church builders
 - The tools of evangelism
 - LOVE!