

Thyatira: Love Without Truth

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 February 2023

Preacher: Walt Alexander

[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

Revelation chapter 2, I'm going to begin reading in verse 18, so if you'd look there with me, it'd be great. And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, the words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.

I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first.

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 eat food sacrificed to idols.

I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of their works.

[1 : 41] And I will strike her dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart.

And I will give to each of you according to your works. But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden.

Only hold fast what you have until I come. The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end. To him I will give authority over the nations.

And he will rule with a rod of iron, as when earth and pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father.

And I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

[2 : 53] Heaven and earth will pass away, but the Lord says, my words will never pass away. One of the most well-known poems in American history is The Road Less Traveled by Robert Frost.

I'm sure you've read it along the way. Two roads diverge in a yellow wood. I'm guessing some pines or something. And sorry I could not travel both. And be one traveler long I stood.

And looked down one as far as I could. To where it bent in the undergrowth. The outset of his poem, Robert Frost, captures the reality that life boils down to two paths.

The book of Proverbs lays out that very clearly. Life boils down to two paths. Again and again, the book of Proverbs, the preacher says, it boils down to a path of wisdom or folly.

Security or danger. Peace or turmoil. Life or death. In many ways, it seems that there are two paths developing for the church in these days.

[4 : 11] One path will be marked by trying to fit in with the culture. By compromising biblical truth, accommodating unbiblical views about gender, sexuality, materialism, worldliness, and so on.

By a desire to welcome everyone. A theology of inclusion, regardless of the cost. The other path will be marked by refusing to just fit in with the culture.

By devotion to truth. By courageously and compassionately standing on biblical convictions. By a pursuit of holiness, regardless of the cost. Carl Truman, sharp thinker on these things.

He said, I would anticipate that within five years, this was written May of last year, we will witness a significant disruption across all major representatives of the Christian faith.

The fault lines, talking about what happens with earthquakes, the fault lines will run between those who find a way to accommodate to the world's terms of good citizenship and to those whose fidelity

to Christ will lead them to varying degrees of internal exile within this earthly city.

[5 : 27] There's a lot there. The latter will maintain Christian teaching and be decried, be labeled as being at best naive, at worst bigoted.

I think that's pretty accurate. But these paths are not new at all.

They've always been before the church. Just a few decades after being planted, the exalted Lord Jesus writes to the church in Thyatira.

This letter is difficult. We don't know much about Thyatira in the way that we know about some of the other cities. It's 40 miles east of Pergamum in the valley. It was a city known for manufacturing and marketing, known for its wool workers and linen workers and things.

Lydia, you remember Lydia, who was converted in Philippi under Paul's preaching, selling purple goods was from Thyatira. And that's about all we know about this city.

[6 : 36] This letter is also difficult. All the smart guys say it's the longest, most challenging book written to the city that we know the least about. But one thing is clear.

The church had begun to compromise. Church had begun to make accommodations. Church had begun to tolerate things they should not, make room for things they should not, accept things they should not.

This letter is a wake-up call to the church in Pergamum, and particularly Jezebel in her midst, which we'll get into in a few moments. But it's also a wake-up call to us. It lays out two paths for us.

Two paths. It calls us to the path of faithfulness, a path that warns us it will be costly and will lead to more and more internal exile, as Carl Trueman said, within this earthly city.

The church, then anywhere where we're going, the church that survives will be strangers in this world, but faithful to the end. The church that survives will be strangers in this world, but faithful to the end.

[7 : 52] We're going to break this out in three commands, through three exhortating commands. The first, let us watch our life. Actually, the first two are exhortating commands.

The third one's the truth. Jesus begins, let us watch our life. Jesus begins with a breathtaking encouragement of this church. We have to zero in on it to capture all that's on there.

Look in verse 19. He says, I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance. It's just layering down these things that are vital to the Christian faith.

I know about them. I know about your faith and love. Faith and love point to the foundational motives of the Christian life. God is a God who is steadfast and faithful, unending faithfulness, but faith and love also point to the first fruits of the Spirit's work in an individual's life.

Again and again, we see this faith towards God, love towards others. We see it in numerous Paul's letters. I've heard your faith and your love, faith towards God, your love for one another.

[8 : 59] But did you notice that love comes first here? 19, I know your works, your love and faith. The Lord is saying, the church in Thyatira is succeeding where the church in Ephesus failed.

Remember them? They kept the truth, but they lost their first love. The Lord says, repent and turn back. They lost their love for one another.

And so he's saying, you have that. Wonderfully, you have love and faith. Their faith and love is growing and producing the fruit of godliness in their life.

I love this next pair where he says, your faith and love is producing service and patient endurance. The idea is their faith and love, it's going in two different directions.

It's going in service towards those in the body of Christ. Service. That's that deacon word from Acts 6. That word of serving. Is it not true that one of the most provoking evidence of God's work in a person's life is when they begin to serve others?

[10 : 09] When they begin to be like the Savior, who did not come to be served, but to serve. Jesus was saying the same, he is saying the same thing to this church.

I know of your service. You guys are crazy. All the serving that goes on in the midst of this church, and the Lord knows all of it. But your faith and love has also produced patient endurance towards opposition in the world.

Where service is directed inward towards the body of Christ, patient endurance is directed outward to being strangers in a strange land, to the hostility that's in this world. And so he's saying, you're being patient because I know what you're facing.

I know what you're up against. I know what you're enduring. I know the pressure and the opposition and persecution. So Jesus says, I know of your faith and love, your service and your patient

endurance, and that your latter works, again referencing Ephesus, exceed the first. You're pressing on well. You're carefully watching your life and doing a good job. You know, pressure and opposition produce so many things, but not often faith and love.
[11 : 26] Remember years ago, reading a book about President Garfield. He had the second shortest presidential term to date. Only 199 days.

All that campaigning. Three months into his presidency, he was shot on July 2nd, 1881. But he didn't die of the shot.

He died of sepsis. All our medical professionals would know, but before the days of careful sterilization, the physicians trying to save his life actually spread bacteria into his body while trying to remove the bullet.

The book is rather intense on describing, but the result was brutal. President Garfield battled infection, fever, sores, abscesses throughout his body until he finally died on September 19th, 1881.

But in and through the pain, everyone was there. Said Garfield proved to be a man of exemplary character.

[12 : 40] All those marveled at his kindness, his patience, cheerfulness, deep gratefulness, even as he'd lie in the bed, dying slowly. One friend said, and I quote, throughout his long illness, I was most forcibly impressed with the manner in which those traits of his character, which were most winning in health, became intensified in illness.

Now that's incredible. Most forcibly impressed that the character traits that were most winning in health became intensified stronger.

in illness. And that's what Jesus is saying about Thyatira. This church, it's intensified. Their faith and love, their service, their patient endurance, it's intensified in opposition.

And so the takeaway for us is, in so many ways, let us watch our lives. Let us watch our lives. Some people say, preach the gospel and use words if necessary.

Now that is a horrible definition of evangelism. How can they believe in him of whom they've never heard? How can they hear unless someone is preaching? But the statement is still challenging because all our words cannot conceal the impact of our lives.

[14 : 03] For good or for bad. It's especially important now in a culture increasingly hostile.

So we who denounce the unrighteousness of homosexuality and transsexuality, do we flee sexual immorality in all its forms? Do we excuse pornography?

Are we similarly appalled and opposed to premarital sex? Like, is the decimal level of our outrage the same? Not that you should raise a decimal when you see something, but we who condemn the lying deceit of certain politicians, do we shade the truth?

Do we play the same game? Do we participate in gossip and slander? This is a hard word. John MacArthur says, you are the only Bible some unbelievers will read.

So what are they reading? What are they reading from your life? What are they reading from our life? You know, one of the most intimidating things about leading a church is being aware that not just yourself, but people in the church are known for something in town.

[15 : 20] That's why I don't want to put stickers all over my car. I'm not so sure I drive in a manner worthy of the gospel yet. I'm working on it. In a process of repentance.

We haven't reputation. What is it? Some unbelievers only brush up with Christianity will be in the aroma and the reputation of our church.

The church that survives will be strangers in this world, but faithful to the end. Let us watch our life. Point two, let us watch our doctrine. Let us watch our doctrine.

You know, after Jesus tells them what he knows about them, he corrects them for compromising and tolerating false teaching. Look in verse 20. He says, but I have this against you, and we know that voice, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching seducing my servant to practice sexual morality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.

Lord Jesus, again, plucked something from the Old Testament to provide him an example in this letter. Now, it's very important to understand this, just a slight aside.

[16 : 38] The book of Revelation contains more references, references, allusions to the Old Testament than any other New Testament book. Now, sometimes we start reading the book of Revelation and we think it's totally out of the blue, totally.

No, that's not the way John wrote it. It's tied in. So, whatever it means is tied into what all of Scripture means. And so, Jesus draws on this story the same way he did last week with Balaam, Balak, to Jezebel.

King Ahab, remember that wicked woman? I was reading this to one of my kids this week and they said, Jezebel's still alive! Not the original one, but her mates still cause trouble.

King Ahab married a wicked woman named Jezebel. She lured him away. Remember, she took Naboth's vineyard. Before that, she lured him away from worshiping God to worshiping idols. She killed off a number of prophets of the Lord, except for Elijah, to prepare the way for the prophets of idols.

She led them to sexual morality, to idolatry. So, Jesus is saying, it seems, Jesus is saying, there's a woman in the church that's a false teacher, leading people into sexual immorality and to sacrifice food to idols.

[18:09] The danger, and there's a lot going on here, but the danger facing the church in Thyatira is false teaching. That's what he's alerting them to and us to.

But notice how Jesus characterizes their teaching. Look in verse 20. He says, you're teaching and seducing. Verse 21, I gave her time to repent, but she refused to repent of her sexual immorality. Pulled off, throw on the sickbed and those who commit adultery with her. So, he's talking about her teaching, but he's characterizing it in these sexual terms. You know, in the church of, or in the city of Thyatira, as we said, there are lots of different merchants and manufacturing of different kinds, all sorts of different clothing they made.

There were trade associations going on in a city like that. A trade guild, a trade union, the way it would be regulated, the things that you would do in a town like that and they would offer sacrifices to different gods.

It would go something like this, maybe the bricklayers association of Thyatira, the bat. You know, they would gather together, they would talk about the project, they would assign people to different projects in Thyatira.

[19:27] It was very important to be a part of this group in order to get the jobs and get the pay you did. So, they would gather together, talk about the goals for the next year or whatever and they would end as they're ending, they would say, hey, we're going to raise a glass to some goddess.

We talked to you about, last week, about the pluralism in that world. We're going to raise a glass to some goddess, maybe to the emperor, something like that and then we'll eat together. Maybe burn some incense and this false teacher, what was going on is this false teacher was telling them it's okay to go to those meetings.

Like, it's okay to be known as that club. It's okay to be in that group but Jesus says it's not okay. It's compromising the truth. It's idolatry. Now, the next question we probably ask is why does Jesus use sexual immorality and adultery to define idolatry?

Well, Jesus is awakening the church to the serious nature of all idolatry. Throughout the Bible, as you know, marriage is a picture of God's relationship with his people. God is the husband and we are the bride.

Marriage is an institution for human beings was created to portray and proclaim this reality that is at the basis of everything. And so, throughout the Bible when the people of God forsake God to worship other things, the Lord confronts them not merely for doing something unhelpful or unwise but for committing adultery like a whore.

[21:05] The sexual terms are meant to awaken the reality of forsaking the Lord for other things. no husband would ever say to his wife, you can run around with whoever you like as long as you come back to me at night.

And so, the Lord uses the language of sexual morality and adultery to confront us about the seriousness of idolatry, the seriousness of joining in with the others, the seriousness of false teaching.

The takeaway for us is very serious in these days. Let us watch our doctrine. Let us watch our doctrine. I know it's probably not stuff we often think about but we have to think about it.

The key to faithfulness as a church will be how well we watch and hold fast to our doctrine. It's not the only thing we need but without it all the other things we have, our values, our biblical application, our relationships will be lost.

Let us be warned and let us watch. The command the church needs in this day is let us watch let us not look outside these walls.

[22 : 12] the command this church needs in these days is let us watch our doctrine. No church loses its doctrine all at once.

It doesn't come one fell swoop. The Puritan Richard Baxter says apostasies have small beginnings. beginnings. Apostasies that's just a renouncing or denial of the faith have small beginnings. No church abandons or renounces their faith suddenly they abandon it gradually step to step seeking to fit in with the broader culture.

so we have to watch our doctrine for compromise. I think that's the first thing that's going on in Thyatira.

We usually misstep by trying to hold on to biblical doctrine and to other beliefs by a wrongful tolerance. Tolerance is a wonderful thing in a lot of ways agreeing to let someone else believe something and y'all exist and do different things but tolerance when it comes into the assembly of God is a very bad thing and so what happens with churches we settle for a happy medium.

[23 : 34] We settle for a halfway house a bargain. We want to fit in I want to fit in we want to be light we don't want to be those wild-eyed scary Christians we don't want to hurt our business and so we make a deal just last week Church of England said that it would not permit bishops to perform same-sex marriages but will allow bishops to bless same-sex unions afterwards.

That's the definition of a halfway house in this area. Just last summer a well-known Christian colonist said he's opposed to same-sex marriage personally believing it is a sin but is supportive of same-sex marriage publicly.

And this is not about me trying to govern the world or anything like that. It's about holding firm to biblical convictions that are slipping away like it's sliding down a hill. There are times these types of compromises in gender and sexuality matters will soon be the order of the day.

Bet you five American dollars for that. But compromise also enters when we compartmentalize the commands of God to certain areas of our life and specific seasons of our life.

We so often compartmentalize Christianity to one hour a Sunday or compartmentalize it to certain areas of our life. We boast that we don't cheat or steal or lie.

[25 : 02] But how does the word of God inform our business, our spending, our family life, our vacations, our desires, the use of our time? Does it hold sway?

We compartmentalize also when we compartmentalize our Christianity to certain seasons of life. It's no exaggeration in these parts. People wait to take on Christianity until they get a family and settle down.

It ought not be. That's a compromise. So too. Many believers enter retirement as if the self-denying commands of following Christ are something they can leave in the rear view.

I was standing there this morning singing and looking up, seeing Bill Warner and Ron Clayton pushing back the darkness. You know? Serving the Lord.

I love it. I can't see them, but praise the Lord. They're not coasting into heaven, watching Hallmark movies.

[26 : 07] They're coming early to be on the setup team. We must watch our doctrine for ambiguity. G.K. Chesterton, in a way that only he can, said, modesty has moved from the organ of ambition.

Modesty is settled upon the organ of conviction where it was never meant to be. A man was meant to be doubtful about himself, but undoubting about the truth.

this has been exactly reversed. How much do we now? Modesty, just a way of saying kind of a biblical self suspicion and carefulness has moved into things of truth.

There's so much certainty in who we are, who we're called to be. God's plan for our life. So little certainty in who God is and whether what he says is true or best.

Many believers misstep by introducing uncertainty and ambiguity into the truth of the Bible. Folks, introduce uncertainty in the meaning of Scripture and gender and sexuality matters saying things like homosexuality is really, it's hardly ever mentioned in Scripture.

[27 : 28] Homosexuality is mainly discussed in a few random Old Testament laws, but the New Testament is all about love. Being gay is not wrong, that's just living the way you are.

Acting on homosexual desires is what's wrong. What I'm trying to say with each of those, they're just introducing a little bit of ambiguity, a little bit of uncertainty. This is not, if you're one, if you're our guest, you came on an interesting Sunday, but trying to take the word.

But, you know, this is not our hobby horse. This is not what we talk about week in, week out. We're talking about this because the word has laid it before us. But that's the way this culture is. That's

what's going on, just a little bit of uncertainty and ambiguity into the meaning of Scripture. And then it goes to the application as well. Things are said like the church is supposed to be a place for broken people. Yes! The God I worship is a God of love.

People who are gay or homosexual or lesbian or transsexual are people made in the image of God. We need to love. Absolutely! Absolutely! But there are people who need to turn in repentance just like every other Christian.

[28 : 40] The Tower of Siloam said, when it fell and they came, why did it fall on these people? What are we supposed to do? Were they worse than everybody else? You said, no!

Everyone's guilty. And unless you repent, you'll fall likewise. This ambiguity, uncertainty, though, leads to compromise not just in gender and sexuality matter, it's in the slogan sold at Cracker Barrel.

Let's take one example. Christianity is all about rules. Christianity is not about rules, it's about relationship. Yeah! The gospel accepts us and sets us free from obeying God to be accepted, but another word for rule in the Bible is law.

Another word for sin in the Bible is lawlessness. It's a wonderful thing to live in the good of the gospel, acceptance by God, but it's a terrible thing to live as if there are no rules. There are commands about the Lord's day, purity, anger, giving, biblical roles, judging, speaking, praying, fasting that must be kept.

And so we watch our doctrine for ambiguity. We watch it for minimalism as well. People say things like Jesus is all about love.

[30 : 01] Why do you care so much about doctrine? People say that to me. Doctrine doesn't matter. What matters is loving God and loving his people. Doctrine just divides. Many believers think the answer is to pare down what we believe, to shave it down to the mere essentials, to channel our inner Marie Kondo and remove all the clutter.

But the New Testament commands us to take out the whole counsel of God. We as a church are not trying to find out how little we can believe.

We're trying to receive, embrace, observe, and celebrate the whole counsel of God. All that God has said we believe is good and right. And we want to uphold it. A tent with a few poles won't withstand what's coming.

Only a house built on the full foundation of the rock of the word of God will. So our membership class will continue to be long. And not for the faint at heart.

The problem in Thyatira is false teaching that leads to compromise, to cutting corners. Jesus ends, concludes with a warning to this false teacher. He says in 21, I gave her time to repent.

[31 : 12] She refuses. I will throw her onto the sickbed and those who commit adultery with her. I will strike her children. Dead. The punishment suits the crime.

Those who mislead the people of God will be held to a stricter judgment. That him who has an ear hear. All false teachers who mislead the church of Jesus Christ will be struck down.

The church that survives will be strangers in this world but faithful to the end. point three, Jesus is watching and will bring us into judgment. Jesus is watching and will bring us into judgment.

This letter concludes with the Lord Jesus telling the rest of the church what to do and how to conquer. it's an exhortation to hear and to persevere.

Did you notice though how Jesus introduced himself in this letter? Look in verse 18. It's the words of the Son of God who has eyes like a flame of like flame like a flame of fire whose feet are like burnished bronze.

[32 : 31] Son of God. That's the only use of Son of God in the whole book of Revelation. Chapter 1, we remember seeing the exalted Lord Jesus Christ, you know, his hair was white and he was radiant and beautiful and glorious and his voice was like the roar of many waters and Jesus is that Son of Man.

It told us about in Daniel 7 but what John's telling us right here, he's also the Son of God mentioned in Psalm 2. He's the one who rules over the nation. Why do the nations rage?

They're raging against him. We peel back the curtain if we knew the way things really work, that's what Jesus is saying. They're raging against him and he's the one who rules over the nation and his feet are like burnished bronze.

All men have feet of clay, Daniel tells us, but the Son of God has feet made of remarkable strength and splendor. He will stand forever and ever.

His eyes are like flames of fire. They have penetrating power to see through anyone and everyone, especially to Thyatira. He's saying his eyes see through all the charades, like all the games, all the compromises, all the ambiguity, all the minimalizing, all the false teaching.

[33 : 53] His eyes look upon the heart. Look in verse 23b. This is searing and so hard to get our minds around. All the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart. This teacher might hide, but I'm the one who'll find her out and snuff her out.

Because I see her heart and I'll give to each one according to their works. His eyes look on the mind and heart. He knows what you think before you say it. He knows what you desire before you act on it. He will give to each one his due.

The one whose eyes roam to and fro throughout the earth. Look into the mind and heart of every man and woman and we'll judge them in the end.

On the day of judgment, all people will stand before the Son of God. It does seem in this letter he's coming earlier in some way to address this Jezebel.

But all people will stand before the Son of God to hear the charges read against them on the final day. Every deed, whether good or evil, every deed, whether public or private, well-known or secret, every deed, whether in fleeting thought or harbored anger, in screamed blasphemies or under the breath grumbling, in self-destructive thoughts or ungodly cravings, there will be nothing to hide.

[35 : 20] There will be nowhere to hide. For all the false teachers and thyatira and all unbelievers present, anytime there's an assembly this size, there's unbelievers present, the description of the day of judgment is a warning.

If you don't turn in repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, when the list of charges are read for everything you have done in your mind and in your body and in this life, no one will stand up for you.

That's what he's saying. The one who came to save, who offers his gospel to all, will be the one in the end who throws you on the bed. Not for lack of trying.

No one will stand up. No one will speak. Instead, the one who could speak on your behalf on that day will condemn you to hell. And so I offer you, that day has not arrived.

It may come tonight or tomorrow. It may come in a week or a year, way after our life. But that day is coming soon. And do you know if you will stand in him on that day? Are you fully convinced?

[36 : 26] Make your calling and election sure, the scriptures say. Are you fully convinced that your calling was legit? That the spirit gave you life and opened up the truth of the gospel to you?

If you're not, please don't tarry, don't wait, don't prolong this day of decision. Make this day of decision today.

Scriptures say today can be this day of salvation for you. If you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, what happens?

You believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The verdict that will come on that day interrupts today.

Because you believe on him. You believe that he suffered in your place, was condemned where you should have been condemned so that he might receive the full fury of God's wrath that will be poured out for eternity on those who do not turn, that he poured it out on Jesus Christ so that you might be freely forgiven and receive his grace.

Please don't wait. Why would you wait? For believers, it's the day in which we will conquer.

[37 : 49] This is crazy. Look in verse, not crazy, amazing. Look at verse 24. He says, those who hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I will say I do not lay on you any other burden.

Only hold fast what you have until I come. Only hold fast. Notice Jesus doesn't say, I'm coming soon, look busy. I'm coming soon, hold it all together.

You know? Don't mess up! You know, that's not what he says. He says, hold fast until I come. It's not perfection he's after, it's faithfulness.

The way to conquer is to keep his words until the end. The way to conquer is to do his works until the end, to watch our life and our doctrine. To the end, the way for us to conquer is by holding fast to the truth of the gospel until the end.

And wonderfully, and I told you 19 times, the word conquer is in the book of Revelation. Wonderfully is included in Revelation 12. Look what it says, how they conquered.

[38 : 57] They have conquered him, that's talking about the Satan, the devil, by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.

For they love not their lives even unto death. They didn't conquer by making a deal. They didn't conquer by being in the end crowd. They didn't conquer by being on the right side of history. They conquered by staying faithful to the word.

Being a stranger in this land and then they conquered in the end. He who holds fast will conquer. Look at what they gain in verse 26. He says, the one who conquers in the end, to him I'll give authority over the nation.

He'll rule with a rod of iron. As when earth and pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself received authority from my father, I'll give him the morning star authority over the nations. Rule with a rod of iron.

If you know your Bible, that's straight from Psalm 2. He's saying, you will be a part of the kingdom that will never end. Jesus will be on his throne forever and ever. His rule will extend from shore to shore.

[39 : 57] All believers will join in his rule over all. All this is reserved not for the perfect or the successful or the innovative or on the right side of history, but those who are faithful to the end.

And wonderfully, this church is tempted to compromise in order to fit in with the culture. Jesus says, there is a place where you belong. Oh, beloved, there's a place where you belong, where your name is already on the register, where your name will soon be called on that roll up yonder, because that is the place you're made for.

Oh, yeah, too. So fast. Hold on.

I didn't want to add to any other burden. Just hold on. Years ago, Don Carson, the theologian, wrote a simple biography on his dad, who was a pastor in French Canada, called *Memoirs of an Ordinary Pastor*.

Tom Carson was, by all accounts, an ordinary pastor. He labored and served only small churches in Canada in the early part of the 20th century, and a day in which the ordinary is overlooked.

[41 : 21] Dr. Carson wrote this book to tell his dad's story and of heaven's perspective of the faithfulness of ordinary people. I quote, Tom Carson never wrote a book, but he loved the book.

He was never wealthy or powerful, but he kept growing as a Christian. Yesterday's grace was never enough. He wasn't a farsighted visionary, but he looked forward to eternity.

He was not a gifted administrator. But there is no verse that says, by this all men will know that you are my disciples if you are good administrators.

His journals have many, many entries bathed in the tears of repentance. But his children and grandchildren remember his laughter. Only rarely did he speak through the pattern of his pattern. Only rarely did he speak through his pattern of reserve and speak deeply and intimately with his children, but he modeled Christian virtues to them. He much preferred to avoid controversy than to stir things up.

[42 : 36] He was a man of principle. He was not very good at putting people down except on his prayer list. When he died, there were no crowds outside the hospital.

No editorial comments in the papers. No announcements on television. No attention paid by the nation. In his hospital room, there was no one by his bedside.

There was only the quiet hiss of oxygen, vainly venting because he had stopped breathing and would no longer need it. But on the other side, all the trumpets sounded.

Dad had one entrance into the only throne room that matters, not because he was a good man or a great man, but because he was a forgiven man. And he heard the voice whom he longed to hear.

Oh, don't you long to hear it. He heard the voice. He longed to hear, well done, my good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy, my master.

[43 : 55] That's what we're after. Oh, my goodness. That's what we want. Man, we don't want a name, a short-lived name in the lights.

Short-lived reputation for being hip or cool. We want to hear that voice. We don't want to hear it. Depart from me. I never knew you. You're well done. Come on in. Come home. The church that survives will be strangers in this world, but faithful to the end.

Robert Frost concludes his poem in a provoking way. I shall be telling this with a sigh.

Somewhere ages and ages hence. Two roads diverged in a wood, and I, I took the one less traveled by.

[45 : 06] And that made all the difference. The right road make all the difference. May God help us to choose wisely.

Father in heaven, how we feel searched.

God, the word is living and active, sharpening, two-edged sword piercing, the vision of soul and spirit, able to discern the thoughts and intentions from the heart. All are naked and exposed to him to whom we must give an account.

Precisely in these moments, God, we feel so tempted to lean on a wrong crutch. So we pray that you would help us. That you would cause that word to be driven into our hearts to produce the fruit that is a hundredfold for your glory, for the praise of Jesus Christ.

We offer everything to you. Search us and know us. See us, see if there's any unclean way in us, God, and lead us in the way everlasting.

[46 : 34] Keep us to the end. In Jesus' name, amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.

For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com