

# Jesus speaks to His Church - Hold on to what you have.

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[ 0 : 00 ] The Holy Spirit is here, and He's moving, and He's doing His work, and just allow that to happen.! Just allow that to happen. He's no bully. He will allow you to know His presence and His peace, but don't miss it.

If He's doing work in your life, just allow that to be part of what this morning's about. It's wonderful to hear and see the goodness of the Lord on this Pentecost Sunday.

Good morning, and we're going to carry on with our series on the letters to the churches in Revelation.

Revelation chapter 18, chapter 2, I beg your pardon, verses 18 to 29, the letter to the church in Thyatira. And there are some complicated things in this sermon, complicated things in this passage, and some things that are really rather wonderful as we see God's victory over evil.

Let's read together, or I'll read to you, shall I? To the angel of the church in Thyatira writes, Nevertheless, I have this against you.

[ 1 : 49 ] You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet. By her teaching, she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.

I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I'll make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of their ways.

I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.

Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teachings and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets, I will not impose any other burden on you, except to hold on to what you have until I come.

To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations. That one will rule with an iron scepter and will dash them to pieces like pottery, just as I have received authority from my Father.

[ 3 : 10 ] I will also give that one the morning star. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Well, there's cheerful for you. The church at Thyatira, this is the fourth letter to the churches, and the third where there is both praise and rebuke.

And we can't move away from the rebuke that's in this passage. There's compromise in the church. Thyatira was an ancient Greek city in Asia Minor, and it's now in modern-day Turkey in the far west of that country. It was also famous for the temple to the pagan god Apollo.

And we'll come to that compromise in a moment, but before we do, let me just have a think about this lovely first, early verse in this passage, verse 18.

[ 4 : 22 ] These are the words of the Son of God who has eyes like flames of fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. The imagery there, and there's a lot of imagery here that we have to work with, but the imagery there is, first of all, that God, or that Jesus, has piercing eyes.

And he sees all. And that's both a wonderful thing, and also can be a little bit scary. Because we can't kid Jesus.

We can't say to Jesus, oh, it's fine, or no, I didn't, or yes, I will. Because he sees all. His eyes are like flames of fire.

And he sees into the very core of our being. And we have to relax into that. We have to allow that to be part of our understanding, of our relationship with Jesus.

That actually, he knows. He knows. He wants us to talk to him about stuff, but he knows. He knows what I'm like. His eyes are like flames of fire.

[ 5 : 45 ] And the extraordinary thing, and the wonderful thing, and the truth of the gospel, is that he knows all that. And yet, he loves us. And so, whenever we see stuff like this in Scripture, and we might feel a little bit like, it feels more like a threat than a promise, don't forget that Jesus loves us.

And as we move into some of this passage, and see some of the behavior, and think about what was going on with Jezebel, and the church, and the compromise, we'll see behavior that's not okay. And people who refuse to repent. But we need to be clear in our hearts, at the beginning of what we're thinking about this morning.

That this, we worship a God who loves us. We worship a God who sent his Holy Spirit on that first Pentecost morning, because he loves us.

Because he wants to change us. He wants us to be the people that he has called us to be. Jesus' feet are like polished bronze, burnished bronze.

[ 7 : 05 ] I'll tell you what, you can go down some rabbit holes when you're looking at all that, preparing for a sermon. But he walks with authority and power amongst the churches.

Jesus walks with us. Walks amongst us. With power and authority. Bringing purification and sanctification to churches.

To this church. To us. As individuals. Just keep the slide there for a minute, please. Go back. Thank you. Just want to allow us to know those truths as we go into the rest of the passage.

Jesus sees all and knows all and loves us. And he walks with authority. He has the victory. Okay.

Thank you. Nothing's hidden from God. I know your deeds, your love, your unfaith, your service and perseverance. I am the one who searches hearts and minds.

[ 8 : 24 ] So in Thyatira, this is a church with some seriously poor behavior by some, while others were persevering and really trying, in some really trying and particularly dreadful circumstances.

So there was real good and real bad. And nothing of that was hidden from God. God saw it all. He saw the good stuff.

The love, the faith, the service, the perseverance. And I'll come back to that. But also the poor stuff. And the big problem was, the big issue was that the church tolerated Jezebel.

And what Jesus refers to as the deep things of Satan. The deep things of Satan being the systematic plan of Satan to seduce people into the ways of the world.

And that's the battle in which we all are engaged. The battle against what is termed here the deep things of Satan.

[ 9 : 37 ] The battle against the seduction into the things of the world. And just to be really clear, that's not just about sexual immorality.

That's about whatever it is that takes our eyes off Jesus, the author and the perfecter of our faith.

Move on. Jezebel, the reference to Jezebel here was the reference to a woman that was part of the story in 1 Kings.

I've just put a couple of verses up there. I'm not going to dwell on it for too long but it's important context. Ahab, son of Omri, did evil in the sight of the Lord more than all those who were before him.

And as if it had not been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, he took it his wife Jezebel, daughter of King Ethbal of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshipped him.

[ 10 : 46 ] Just stop there for a moment. So Ahab was doing things which were worse than all the other kings who had done rotten stuff.

If you read through 1 Kings, there's an awful lot of misbehaviour going on. And then we come to Ahab and he's trumping it all. He's saying, I can do worse than that. And he went off and did all sorts of awful stuff.

And it says, he said he did it more than were before him. And if that wasn't enough, if that wasn't enough, and then he went and married Jezebel.

And this awful verse in 2 Kings 9, when Joram saw Jehu, he said, is it peace, Jehu? He answered, what peace can there be so long as the many whoredoms and sorceries of your mother Jezebel continue?

Wow. You don't want to read that, do you? But that's part of it. Next slide, please. Jezebel was a woman who led people into all sorts of dreadful behaviours.

[ 12 : 02 ] And that's the, and so the reference in this passage here isn't to the Jezebel we're talking about there, but to the notion, the behaviour of Jezebel.

A false prophet teaching falsehood. Same behaviour as John was talking about last week in the church in Pergamum, fornication and eating food sacrificed to idols. But it's really important to note, this is both literal and spiritual adultery. This is both literally fornication, this is both literally eating food sacrificed to idols, but this is equally double-mindedness. This is being, having a foot in each camp. This is being seduced by the world and by the world's norms and allowing ourselves to think, well, a little bit of this and a little bit of that won't harm. And so, we can't really hide behind, well, I'm not getting involved in temple prostitutes or I'm not eating food sacrificed to idols or whatever the equivalent is today because our thoughts, our hearts, our behaviour take us into places where we shouldn't go.

[ 13 : 42 ] And that's hard because that's what our thoughts and our minds do. We're taken and we are drifted because there's an awful lot of stuff out there that is tempting and there's an awful lot out there that is seductive.

Now, it's really important to say at this point that this is not a sermon about condemnation and I want to make sure that no one is feeling, well, yeah, you're right, I might as well give up because the things that I was saying to start with remain true Jesus sees all and loves all.

And what we see in the passage is that Jezebel was invited to repent of her ways and she chose not to.

And those who followed Jezebel and behaved according to what Jezebel was suggesting and teaching them are also invited to repent of their ways.

And if they choose to repent they will be forgiven. If they choose to repent they will not receive the punishment that Jesus outlines.

[ 15 : 09 ] Pretty unpleasant painful punishment. But that's not the inevitability. That's not the inevitability.

Beware double-mindedness. You adulterous people James writes don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God.

Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands you sinners and purify your hearts you double-minded. In that same passage resist the devil and he will flee from you.

You see we've got this battle going on and the church in Thyatira was struggling with it and they tolerated Jezebel's teaching.

and they tolerated this double-mindedness and we have each of us individually but we also have each of us in this church and if you're visiting it in your churches the responsibility and the duty the grave duty to watch against double-mindedness.

[ 16 : 38 ] and we have to be kind to each other in making sure that we challenge what is not okay.

me. Just quickly the next slide I've really covered it but Jezebel had been following there was dire warnings let's just go on because I've talked about that.

Afflictions Bears and lions! I was drawn to Lamentations 3 and being drawn to Lamentations is not altogether a great thing because there's a lot of goings on in there and it starts off with lots of stuff which isn't much fun I am the man who has seen affliction happy days like a bear lying in wait and a lion in hiding he dragged me from the path and mangled me and left me without help can I say that there are some weeks and some days that I feel like that I've been dragged by a well I've been a bear a lion dragged me out of the path and mangled me I do feel mangled a bit mashed up I've become the laughing stock of all my people

I feel humiliated I feel embarrassed people are laughing at me people think I'm a fool or a joker people think that there's no good about me I'm a laughing stock I have been deprived of peace my soul is downcast within me and yet yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed for his compassions never fail and new every morning great is your faithfulness I say to myself the Lord is my portion therefore I will wait for him just go back a slide Shelley if you would please you've been mangled you're a laughing stock you've got no peace and your soul is downcast okay you can go forward again but yet

I have hope hope there's a contradiction there isn't there there's a contradiction it might be a bit confusing how can you feel all those things and yet have hope how can you feel all those things those really dreadful things and those things which are real those feelings that we can identify with and yet I have hope because Jesus has eyes of flaming fire and feet of burnished bronze he sees

all and knows all and loves you anyway he walks bringing hope he walks bringing reconciliation and truth and sanctification into our lives that's why I have hope because of God's great love we're not consumed it might be really tough it might be we might be in a season which is really hard and yet the promise of God is we are not consumed his compassions never fail and you every morning great is the faithfulness of God to each of us wherever our lives are in whatever our situation being confident of this

[ 20 : 58 ] Philippians 1 being confident of this that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus I love that verse because whatever's going on and whatever I've goofed up this week and it's only a matter of what I've goofed up this week whether I'm going to goof up whatever I've done wrong however I've let Jesus down he forgives me and he's carrying on working on me it will come as a surprise to some of you I'm somebody who is a work in progress who knew but I am because it says it there and one day it will be completed I will be completed the complete Andy Lloyd does exist somewhere isn't that nice

I am confident of this he who began a good work in you in me in each of us will bring that work to fulfilment in his will in his time in his way and that's why I've got hope if you're feeling mangled and mashed at the moment and the bears are dragging you around and yet I have hope and that's the choice that we have that's the choice that we have as did the church in Thyatira have some in the church chose the deep things of Satan and I want just to be careful with that phrase because I'm not talking about there necessarily about all this sort of dreadful it sounds a dreadful phrase and it is a dreadful phrase but what that refers to is this seductive engagement with those things of the world that we didn't ought to be engaging with and part of who we are is that we need to make a choice that as far as we are able we will stand against that and when we fall and when we fail and we will because we are broken people we will go back to

God and ask for forgiveness and he will forgive us we will repent and don't forget the clarity of the letter to the church in Thyatira if those who are engaging in those things repent they will not face the they will not why because Jesus died on the cross because Jesus rose from the dead because Jesus has made forgiveness available to us because the Holy Spirit dwells within us and he is here today holding out his hand offering hope forgiveness joy and a way forward we can choose the deep things of Satan or the morning star the beautiful pure light and joy of Jesus Christ which one which one in one sense when you write it down on a slide like that it's dead easy isn't it which one on a

Tuesday afternoon when life's getting really difficult and the temptations of the world are all around you which one how do you encourage me how do you say to me Andy choose well choose the morning star and I might not know that I need to do that on that day and I need you as my brothers and sisters to put your arm around me and say come on fella choose well choose well after me and my house I choose the Lord next slide please there were real struggles real struggles in the church in

Thyatira all sorts of afflictions and yet the faithful well they remained faithful our experience is the same and then when we're there we're encouraged by Jesus hold on to what you have what Jesus says there is for those of you who are not behaving according to the ways of Jezebel I'm not going to ask anything more of you I have no other request of you apart from this hold on to what you have so he wasn't saying well done everybody you're not being like Jezebel now here's a job a thing of work to do here's some stuff that I want you to do here's some works or some deeds or some behaviors that I want you to Jesus says this nothing else you're doing grand hold on to what you have next slide please

[ 26 : 53 ] I can't help but want to sing just hold on to what you've got at this point but I won't because most of you won't know it and if you do you wouldn't want me to hear me sing it what do we do what does that mean how do we hold on to what we have just a few things count your blessings allow God to show you what's good in your life allow God to show you the things he has blessed you by and blessed you with and live a life of thankfulness for those of us that live in Whitby I find it really easy to say wow look at that God's good for those of you who don't sorry there's some houses for sale find a place where you can look at

God's creation and give thanks find a place wherever you are whatever you're doing where you can be grateful to God be part of a fellowship be part of a godly community whatever that means for you but be part of a community who worship almighty God and rejoice in holding on to that do not give up meeting together as some of you have chosen to do always meet together with your brothers

and sisters your godly community as the church in Thyatira did and were commended for practice and develop love faith service and perseverance I haven't got time to go into each of those but there are the good words and well worth meditating on this week love faith service perseverance in one sense love faith and service are quite nice really aren't they service can be a bit hard work sometimes perseverance stickability cracking on when the last thing you want to do is crack on just foot in front of the other somebody

I forget who it was in church recently talked about people who plotted plotting is good plotting is a good thing some days one foot in front of the other about as good as it gets and that's okay that's perseverance delight in your relationship with God revel in it he sees all and knows all and loves you with a passion it's a wonderful thing it's a wonderful thing avoid double-mindedness avoid the rationalization of sin if I've sinned I've sinned I need to repent the danger is when I say well yeah technically it was a sin but it doesn't really matter double-mindedness double-mindedness James would call that spiritual adultery take captive every thought to make it obedient to

Christ 2 Corinthians 10 and then finally what does Jesus commend the church for doing all the love faith service and perseverance and then he says and you're doing more now your works are great now than at first which means that as we go forward we've got to get better at this not think that somehow we have graduated I've been a Christian for a minute 10 years 50 years I've now got it cracked I can put my feet up no what Jesus is saying very clearly is make sure that what you're doing now is greater than what you were doing at first wow that's really hard because actually in the first flushes of our faith some of us beavered round like knock cases doing all sorts of stuff for Jesus and now we've let it slide a bit what do we do what do we do we seek before God to make what we do now greater than what was at first the risk of the church in Thy Tyra wasn't the woman Jezebel probably wasn't called Jezebel it was just an imagery it wasn't that it was the fact that the church tolerated her and the fact that Satan's schemes are to seduce us into worldliness and our job our calling and our hope is that Jesus will show us the true light will forgive us when we goof up when we sin and will take us into a place of wonderful truth and light because that's the promise he has made to each of us and to this church

[ 33 : 03 ] Amen Thankyou