

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 4th March 2018
Services: 930 Tewantin
Series: 7 searching letters
Passage: Revelation 2:18-29
Title: To the church in Thyatira
Outline: Authority
What's good
What's not
Action
Encouragement

"No ticket no start" reads the poster on the building site.

ie. if you are not a member of a trade union, you are not permitted to start work on the site.

and in Thyatira at the end of the 1st century - the same rule applied.

Thyatira was a bit of a back water, but famous for its manufacturing.

famous too for its trade unions or manufacturing guilds.

there were guilds or associations for bakers and bronze workers, linen workers, cobblers, weavers, tanners, dyers and potters.

and it was very hard to get work; unless you were a member of the appropriate guild.

for the **Christian** in Thyatira - this was a great problem. //

Because being part of the guild meant attending regular dinners and activities, which were usually associated with some **pagan religion**.

the food was **meat** usually offered to some **god** or **other** in **ritual sacrifice**, and more often than not, the meal degenerated into what could be described as an **orgy**.

Usually some sort of sexual immorality was part and parcel of the pagan religion and the guild dinner - and therefore caused great problems of **conscience** for the Christian.

not to be part of the guild meant no **work**.

But to be **part** of the guild, meant leaving **Christian scruples** – godly standards, behind. //

What to do?

You needed **wisdom** and you needed **courage**. Wisdom to know the right thing to **do** and courage to **follow through**. //

We need that **daily** too - don't we?

When **we're** faced with various ethical dilemmas – when temptations to compromise come our way... when opportunities arise to get "in" with a certain crowd – but that **very opportunity** – will actually encourage our **greed** and open us up to **temptations** of various kinds?//

We need **wisdom** and **courage**.

Wisdom to see the issues **clearly** – and **courage** to **follow** our **convictions**. //

But we've jumped right in here... so we will come back to this... but we want to follow our usual pattern and see that Jesus has

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1. **authority** to speak

he sees:

2. what's **good** that he sees in their life as church...
3. What's **not** – which requires rebuke or admonition....

We see a call to

4. **action**

And finally a word of

5. **encouragement**...

so first – how is Jesus described here in term of his:

1. AUTHORITY

Have a look with me – v14 – *These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.*

Once again – this description repeats an element of the vision John first saw in ch 1.

how are his eyes described? Verse 18 - like blazing fire!

what does a blazing fire do?

Remember as kids setting up a bonfire - building it for weeks - the light it would give off!

why are His eyes described this way - he sees all!

remember, we've already seen that he walks among the churches - he has an intimate knowledge of what is happening - knows all - good and bad.

v23 - we are reminded that he is a God who searches **hearts** and **minds**.

... he looks into our **hearts** and sees the **reality**.

...and because he **sees** all and **searches** all

we can't **fool** him.

we may try to fool **ourselves**.

may try to put it over **others**,

but Jesus' blazing eyes see it **all** as it really is.

and he sees right through those times when we try to **rationalise** or **explain** away our **sin**.

sees when we want to fit **in** with the world around us and crave **its** acceptance rather than **God's**. //

sees our wanting to **hide** our commitment to Christ. //

we can't **pretend** you see

you may be struggling to be **faithful** in an area today; something you do **battle** with –

he knows – your **struggle** to keep on **track**, your struggle to do what you know you should - he **knows!** //

And his **feet**? What about his **feet**?

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why are his feet **described** like **this**?

Chances are this indicates the white hot **heat** of his **judgement**...!

We'll see more of that a little later – but put these images together – his eyes which **see** all and his feet to which you'll be brought if you meet him as **judge**...

And we're reminded – that the Son of **God** as he's described here – not just Son of **Man** – that this one **has authority** – and we should **listen** to him....

2. WHAT'S GOOD

Have a look with me at v19 – *I know your deeds, your **love** and **faith**, your **service** and **perseverance**...*

Four keys words there.

Do you see the **connection** between those four?

Their **service** and **perseverance** surely was the result of their **love** and **faith**!

They had a deep **love** for the Lord **Jesus**.... A deep love of the **gospel**... a deep love for **people**...

And they **trusted** Jesus.... That's what **faith is** - it is simply **trust**... **trust** in **Jesus** – trusting him for **salvation** by his death and resurrection... trust in his **promises**... taking him at his **word**.

And if you have a deep **love** of the **Lord Jesus** and your trust him – you have banked your whole **life** on the **truth** of the **gospel** – than what will you **do**? – you will **live** your life in the **service** of **God** as you serve **others**...

....and.... you will **persevere** no matter what... //

Friends this church is packed **full** of people who are living a life of service...

Almost without **fail**, each and every person in this congregation is willing to **serve** in some way.

Next Sunday there'll be **more** opportunity for you to indicate you want to serve here...

You give **generously** to the work of the Lord

Many are doing more now than they did at first because the love of Jesus is changing you and transforming you and **exciting** you and **enlivening** you!

Friends, like **Thyatira**, this is a place of **love** and **faith**... and because of that – a place of **service** and **perseverance**.

Be **encouraged**. The Lord Jesus **knows** of your life of service. Keep **going**. **Press on!** //

But – but despite these good things – there are some very serious **issues** here with some very serious **implications** – especially if they are not addressed!

3. WHAT'S NOT (so good)

Have a look with me at v30 – *nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols....*

"Jezebel" **called** herself a prophetess. That's a giveaway from the start: she was **fake**.

Her name wasn't **really** Jezebel anyway!

Jesus **likens** this woman in the congregation there, to an Old Testament wife of one of Israel's kings – Jezebel – wife of **Ahab** and therefore **Queen**.

She was **notoriously** immoral – her story in 1 Kings will make your hair stand on its head... but by **likening**

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this woman to that **Jezebel**, the point is made very clear, that this woman is **not acceptable**, and nor are those who **follow** in her **footsteps**.

She was teaching many things people were **wanting to hear!**

she began saying things like: look, it's only an **idol**, and we know idols are nothing **anyway**; why worry about the meal and the food sacrificed to idols? /// After all, you don't want to **retreat** from the **real world do you?**

who knows - she may have also justified sexual immorality on the grounds that well, you're **mature** enough to handle it. What your **body** is doing, won't affect the **soul**. (Gnostics of 2nd - 3rd Century promoted this thought).

so what this prophetess was teaching, gave some Christians an **out** you see: here was the chance to keep their **jobs** - they could **justify belonging** to the **union!**

now - here is a real **tension** for us, isn't it?

how **close** do we **get** with the world?

we don't want to appear as a bunch of **out-of-touch old fogies!**

And we've got to keep **living** and **working** in the world - we can't just **bow** out of **society**.

we can sometimes justify **any** type of behaviour on the grounds that

we **need** the **job**

OR - it won't **really hurt** me

OR - **God** will **understand!**

you can see why this so-called **prophetess** – was "**Jezebel-like**" in her rebellion against God and why her own evil influence was so attractive!

he who **sees** all, saw right through Jezebel's prophecies to the **evil** that was **there**.

and in her **followers**, he saw that **intent** that looks for a way **out** - an **excuse** for **sin** - a **justification** for **ungodliness**.

How serious is this?

Very serious – have a look with me at vv21ff – *I have given her (ie this woman called Jezebel) time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her 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.*

not remaining **faithful** to **God**, has **always** been pictured in the Bible, in terms of **adultery**.

God - husband; Israel - wife - whenever Israel went after foreign gods they were called **unfaithful** - **adulterers**.

this **Jezebel-type lady** was leading people - not just into **literal sexual** immorality, but in the end, **away** from **God**, to **foreign gods** - **idols**.

for Jezebel herself – her bed-scene of adultery, now a scene of **suffering**.

those who “commit adultery” with her? – these are they who are playing the field of **idols** with her – they have left the one **true** God for **idols!**

her “children” – are not **literal** children - but those who she has caused to **forsake** God as she has done. And if they **don't** repent, yes – they will face **spiritual death!**

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punishment/judgement – will be **severe!**

for in more than one place in the Bible, to have **started** with God, and then **left** him is to put one's self in a **very serious place indeed**. To **know** the truth and walk **away** - **worse** than not having **known** it.

but will you notice 2 things:

- time has been given for repentance - in God's mercy and grace, he never stops giving people opportunity to put things right with him. That is always his **first** desire - he is not a vengeful, angry God wanting to pay out on people who have treated him badly - he is **loving, and merciful and forgiving**, and would rather they came **back** to him and ask **forgiveness**.

secondly, **judgement** is according to **deeds**.

how does this fit with our understanding of **grace**?

simply this - you can **repent** and take hold of God's kind offer of **forgiveness** in the Lord Jesus and be judged according to **HIS** deeds – his work on the cross for you - or you can **refuse** and be judged according to **YOUR deeds**. And to be judged according to your **deeds** will mean being put **out** of God's presence in the **end**. //

what is this **saying**?

that **beginning** to **compromise** when it comes to our commitment to **Jesus** may just end up being **fatal!**

for you may end up, forsaking God all **together** and **never returning** - **refusing** his kind offers for you to repent - and in the end meeting his **feet** like **burnished bronze**. //

As a church then, we must hear and heed the warning... that it is possible to be going **pretty well** and making **progress**... but that all the **while** – over here in one corner, there is someone leading **others** into **worldliness**. Leading others into **sexual promiscuity**. Leading others into **mixing their religions**, going **soft** on the **edges**, **blurring** the **distinctions**...

How can be this be **avoided**?

We need lines of **accountability**. A good friend of mine in London encourages all members of his church to be in a **prayer triplet**. To pray with two **others** every week, and to have an **agreement** whereby every couple of weeks or so, they can ask you **anything**.

“**How are things at home**? How are things at work, how are things between you and God? What temptations are you facing, how can we pray....?”//

I want to ask this morning – are you being influenced by someone who is **flirting** with the ways of the **world**? Is someone leading you **away** from committed relationship with the Lord Jesus, and into a place where you are trying to serve and follow more than one **God**? //

Don't **tolerate** that person's influence any **more!** As far as it is possible, distance yourself from them. Be aware of the **attractiveness** of what they put in front of you – but see too its **emptiness**... **Walk away**.

Two final things as we run out of time... what is the call to action here:

4. ACTION

Have a look with me a 25 – Jesus says to those who **haven't** been sucked in to Jezebel's influence – **hold on to what you have until I come**

That's it – **hold on!**

Don't give **ground** to the **evil one**

Don't **listen** to those who want to lead you **astray**

Don't **compromise**

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Don't **falter**

Hang on in there...!

Brothers and sisters – I want to say that to **you** this morning – **hold on**.

You're doing **well**.

You're full of **love** and **faith** and **service** and **perseverance**.

Don't **stop**. Don't **give up**. Don't be **distracted**. Resist **temptation**. Stay **clear**. Stay **courageous**.

Paul says at the end of **1 Cor 15** *Stand firm. Let nothing move you, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain!*

Finally the

5. ENCOURAGEMENT

Have a look with me at v26 – *To him who overcomes, and does my will to the end - who holds on! – I will give authority over the nations – and v28 – I will also give him the morning star.*

I'm going to be brief here...

Friends, as **we** proclaim the **good news**, we share in Jesus' **authority** over the **nations**...

when we **proclaim** the **gospel** and people **respond**... their hearts **soften** and they come under Jesus' **rule**...

...but when people **harden** their hearts to the **gospel**? ...then in the end they will find themselves **broken**...!

And the **morning star**? Jesus describes **himself** as the 'morning star' later in Revelation - "*I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.*" Rev 22:16

As we will share Jesus' **authority**, so shall we share his glory as the '**morning star**'!

That's the promise friends... **hold on** – hold on – don't **compromise**... don't get **distracted**... don't lose **focus**, or **energy**... hang **in** there – don't **stray**. Keep – **loving, trusting, serving – persevering**... .. and as you do, you will share Jesus' **authority** and the ultimately... **his glory**!

Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Amen.