

The Big idea: Conquering is the normal Christian life. It involves standing on the truth at all costs. Purpose: To encourage the church to trust and obey Jesus, standing firm in his truth, not compromising with things that give us an easy life, but resting in the security He has provided.

## Outline

A. Introduction

B. Jesus tells the truth

C. 'The world' deceives

D. If we trust and obey the truth we are blessed and are a blessing.

## Reading

18 "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.

19 "I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. 20 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 practise sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. 21 I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. 22 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 her works, 23 and I will strike her children 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. 24 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. 25 Only hold fast what you have until I come.

26 The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, 27 and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. 28 And I will give him the morning star. 29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

A. Introduction (Mood - chatty) I changed job 3 months ago. I used to be one of about 5000 engineers developing cars for Jaguar Land Rover. Now I'm one of about 12 people who provide a service to those 5000 engineers. This is very difficult, and sometimes we don't do it well. And about a week ago my boss said to me, 'Tim, I'd like you to think how we can do our job better - how can we better serve the needs of these 5000 engineers?' So I thought about it, and a couple of days later I went up to my boss and said, 'I want to send a survey out to some of these engineers and ask them: 1. What do you think of our department? 2. Do you think we are doing a good job?' And I could see my boss' eyes widen. Gulp! Scary!! Getting feedback on how well we are doing can be tough! Sometimes it hurts! I remember going on a coaching course we were told to give 2 or 3 times as much positive feedback as negative feedback! The trouble with going on a course like that is when you next get feedback from your boss (who also went on the course) then you know he's only saying 2 or 3 nice things so he can say what's really WRONG! It becomes a bit of a game thinking of plenty of nice, but empty, things to say so that you can say the negative. (Mood - preach) B. Jesus the Truth-teller Jesus hasn't been on that course. Jesus speaks the truth. He doesn't dress the truth up in a sandwich of niceness.

The Son of God (Rev 2:18, Dan 3:25, Ps 2:7) does a lot better than saying a few 'nice' before he gives the real feedback. The end of Revelation tells us that the church is his Bride! (Rev 19-20) Christ loves his bride he gave his life for his bride. (Eph 5:25) Rev 19:6-8 "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. 7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; 8 it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure" — for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. God gives the church the fine robes for that perfect wedding day but the church must put them on! He makes us Holy and so we must do our righteous deeds. So in Rev 2 Jesus isn't giving feedback to a sloppy worker! Jesus is making his Bride right...for that happy day! he speaks the truth to us. He gave himself for you and me... ..that he might sanctify us, having cleansed us... ..so that we might be without even a little spot... ..or a tiny wrinkle or any such thing... ..that the church might be holy and without blemish on that day! (Eph 5:26-27) Everyone who has this hope purifies himself just as Jesus is pure. (1Jn 3:3) We haven't just been given a few words of positive feedback! We have been undergirded. ...he puts us on solid ground... ..he is that solid ground...

...he gave himself! ...he has done it! We can stand on that solid ground...what Jesus has done...and we listen as Jesus speaks the truth to the church! This is just what we need. Not fluffy feedback. We need God's feedback. We need God's correction. And he is the only one who can offer true correction with perfect fairness (Jer 10:24, Jer 17:10). He has eyes like a flame of fire, penetrating, that see the truth clearly. (Rev 2:18a, Dan 10:6) He has feet of burnished bronze (Rev 2:18b, Dan 10:6, Eze 1:14) true and solid and everlasting (not fragile and brittle like clay or iron (Dan 2:40-44)) He knows the way. His strong feet point the way of truth. Concluding Point: So let's listen in absolute security to the truth Jesus says to the church. (Mood change - study) "I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first." - What a great church! The internal things of the heart: love, faith The external fruitful actions: service, endurance (presumably in the face of difficulty) And they are getting better than they were at first! What a good church! He loves the church! He gave himself for the church! "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 practise sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols." He loves the church! He gave himself for the church!

"she calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practise sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols." This isn't finger-wagging feedback. This is a cry from God's heart. - this woman is spoiling the Bride of Christ! So, isn't it amazing that God has given her time to repent!? - what a gracious and gentle God!! (Mood change - informal) C. 'The world' deceives and leads us to compromise God's standards This woman Jezebel. Who was she? She was definitely part of the church - because the church as a whole 'tolerated' her. Nobody was saying, 'This is wrong!' (Point A) Our society tells us we MUST tolerate others' behaviour - whatever else Christians believe they MUST be tolerant! And certainly we should be tolerant of those outside the church. (Point B) But Jesus says we are wrong to tolerate things that blemish his Bride. At Thyatira this Jezebel was in the church! Now...who was she? Most people think Jezebel wasn't her real name. Jezebel was renowned as being a terrible woman in the OT! (It would be like having a baby boy and calling him Adolf) This Jezebel in the OT incited God's people in the OT to worship Baal. (1 Ki 16:31, 21:25) Her husband Ahab was a useless leader of God's people because he didn't keep his eyes on God - which was his job (1Ki 2:2-3, Ps 2). He neglected the truth, so he had no real authority over the

people, and they ran wild. Instead he went running after Jezebel who lead God's people into idolatry.

They turned from the true God and turned towards false Gods. 1Ki16&19. The OT Jezebel was leading God's people into unfaithfulness. (Mood - preach) How should we interpret the Thyatira Jezebel? Revelation 17 uses sexual Immorality as a picture of unfaithfulness to God. A common biblical theme: God's people are like an adulterous wife when they forget God. Marriage between a man and a woman is a great picture of two different beings coming together - like God and his people. Likewise adultery is a picture of God's unfaithful people. So because of that link, and because Jezebel in the OT isn't overtly committing adultery, we can see this Jezebel of Thyatira being about false teaching that leads the church away from faithfully following God. But I don't think that's enough. We should also think of this being real, literal sexual immorality. - partly because of the strong linguistic link to Acts 15:28-29, - but also the food sacrificed to idols is real, literal... ..let's look more at this... (Mood - new topic) Food sacrificed to idols Thyatira was a place with a booming economy - full of trade guilds - like purple cloth (Acts 16:14) - bronze artefacts (Ramsey) - and slaves Trade guilds were a kind of network:- Friends, also in business - maybe all the people working with fine linen in a guild - You helped each other out in business - The trade guild would have banquets where they all got together - and built their contacts...building relationships.

That sounds good! - Each guild would have a deity...an idol ...and of course the food at the banquet was sacrificed to the deity - And there would have been rituals of worship ...where people bowed down to this...god. Doesn't sound good at all! - it's a bit like the Masons today. (Point A) It's not all bad! Building contacts and supporting each other! (Point B) but it is bad if it means you aren't a faithful worshipper of God. Paul talks about this dilemma in 1 Cor 8: (Point A) It can be OK to eat meat sacrificed to idols - because idols are nothing (Point B) But it's not OK to eat meat sacrificed to idols - if it means you aren't a faithful follower of Jesus. There was a huge pressure to blend in with the culture. And although we don't have people in Warwickshire meeting up for banquets and idol worship we do have huge pressures to blend in with our culture for the sake of getting on in the world. (PointB) And we risk not being faithful to Christ. Where are the areas of your life where fitting in with the world means we are not becoming that perfect, beautifully prepared bride of Christ?

(Mood - preach) The classic areas God would have us look at are these: Sexual purity The MeToo campaign has clearly demonstrated that there are people who treat others like objects to be lusted after. Even in churches. Jesus tells us to not tolerate it. Don't be like Thyatira. Name it. It is wrong. Money Jesus tells us in Luke 16:13: "No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." Materialism Stuff that makes us feel good. Wouldn't the world notice if we emphatically did NOT have the latest stuff? Family, Jobs, Relationships ...the things that give us security. Maybe your boss asks you to turn a blind eye to something bad? Maybe you invest in the sorts of things everybody invests in... ..even though you know that means ugly businesses? (Mood - personal) Comments about my own struggle with worry. Not resting in God. (Mood - preach) Our lives are full of grey areas. And I'm sure those trade guilds of Thyatira felt like a grey area. This Jezebel would have been persuading people to join in with the trade guilds. "Oh! Its a grey area!!!"

'well, you can't just shun people and look down on them ' you can't just turn your back on earning a living ' you need to build relationships with people ' if you stand aloof then people will think Christians are strange and then they'll think God is strange!' Justifying our impurity is something we can spend a lifetime doing. But Jesus sees us, with those fiery, piercing eyes... ..searching mind and heart Not because he wants to condemn us... ..but because he longs for that pure Bride. And he isn't even quick to punish! Even this false teacher was given time! But be sure of this: the judgement comes to the unrepentant. - to any Jezebel who gives false teaching - but also to any of her 'children', those who follow that teaching. A sick-bed is appropriate punishment for someone who has made the marriage bed impure. (Mood - challenge) Those searching, fiery eyes are only scary when we want to hide from the Lord. Can you feel that fear? Is he challenging you? Do you feel some strain? - You can trust him with what really matters - your soul. (Ps 27:4) - And the less important things may be taken from you. - But the one thing that matters is secure... ..and will never put to shame (Rom 10:11)

(Mood - encouragement) D. When we trust and obey the truth, we are blessed, and are a blessing This whole passage is about standing firm on the truth - Those fiery eyes that see the truth - he searches heart and mind - He knows the good and bad - He sees what isn't true...the falseness And finally he

tells us to hold fast to the truth we already know. That's what conquering looks like... ..standing firm on the truth, not compromising for an easy life. And that is what we do, with Jesus, in the grey areas... ..walking with Jesus, we purify ourselves... ..we do those righteous deeds. Because everyone who has this hope purifies himself just as he is pure. So when it comes to the end and Jesus promises something to the victorious ones, those who conquer, I think that is linked to truth too. Its not like he's got a divine gift list... hmmm...flicking down the list...hmmm - Ephesians...conquerers get....to eat of the tree of life - Smyrna...poor things...they won't be hurt by the second death - Pergamum...manna, and a white stone with a name on it... Hmmm...now then...what shall we give to these Thyatirans???? No. It's not like that. (Mood - serious) If God gives us his truth and we obey his truth then this brings authority, God's authority, to our lives. If the truth of God is reflected in how you live your life, in all those little grey areas where you are tempted to compromise, then that TRUTH brings authority into your life.

This 'authority' isn't just a random little gift found under God's Christmas tree. It is an outcome of trusting and obeying the Father. (Point A) Ahab had no authority! He took his eyes from the truth and the people ran wild. (Point B) But Jesus... Jesus said, 'the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing' John 5:19 and then 5:27. Jesus obeys Father God. He stands in the truth. So then the truth of God manifests in the life and teaching of Jesus. And people are astonished: 'Look at his authority!' (Luke 4:32, Matt 7:28, John 7:46). As we hold fast to the truth... ..especially in the grey areas... ..then something of God's authority is revealed in us.

So this gift of authority isn't simply some far future gift. It is the reality of God working in your life, here, and now. Little Thyatira...probably the least significant place. But Jesus says, 'The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations...' Little us...just ordinary people living day by day lives. But Jesus says, 'The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations...' How has God spoken to you through this letter to the church of Thyatira? Are you too tolerant of things that are definitely wrong? Where are you tempted to compromise? Do you need to repent?

We can trust Jesus. He longs for his bride. We are in the safest of hands. Let's reflect on these challenges and encourage one another.

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