

When Jesus Meets Jezebel

Revelation 2:18-29

(preached Pine Grove 12/4/16; Sunday AM)

Introduction

George Sada was born in Iraq and eventually went to Iraqi Air Academy where he graduated in 1959...

He became a distinguished pilot in the Iraqi air force and studied and trained all over the world..

He eventually retired from the Iraqi air force in 1986, but his retirement was short....

Because in 1991, Saddam Hussein the president of Iraq at the time decided to invade Kuwait and he asked Sada to come and serve as Air Vice Marshal for the invasion.

Sada agreed and became one of Saddam's closest advisers for the Kuwaiti invasion.

In one tense situation, Sada was in the room when Hussein ordered the execution of Kuwait POWs, but he stood up and refused to comply with Hussein's order.

You see, George Sada was a believer in Christ.

He had been born into a Iraqi Christian family, and his faith affected all aspects of his life..

And though Sada knew that refusing the orders of Saddam Hussein usually ended in death, he could not in good conscience support the murder of these POWs.

Interestingly enough, Hussein didn't kill Sada on the spot and he even allowed the POWs to live as well.

Saddam even allowed Sada to stay on his advising committee until the invasion was over...

He then ordered Sada out of Iraq but also ordered no one to land a hand on him to harm him...

Sada eventually made it to the US, where he helped our country overthrow Hussein in 2003...

And he now lives in Oklahoma enjoying retirement...

The question that Sada gets asked most often is how did he survive as a Christian in a government that was often hostile to believers...

And Sada's answer is very simple...

The Lord had a purpose for him and as long as the Lord was going to use him, Sada said he was always in the safest place any man can be...

And that is squarely in the hand of God..

This morning we come to our 4th church that Jesus is going to address and this is the church at Thyatira...

And this church is an interesting church for this simple reason...

It was a church of incredible immorality and perversion, but within its membership were some truly committed believers in the Lord...

So, how did they make it and what we they up against?

Well, we will find out this morning in Jesus' letter to this church...

It is his longest message of all 7 letters and it was written to the smallest church in the smallest town...

But it held truth for them and it holds truth for us this morning...

So, let's look at what Jesus had to say to the church at Thyatira and let's find 3 qualities of our Lord Jesus Christ in this long letter that should convict and comfort our church at Pine Grove this morning...

I am not going to read all these verses at one time, so let's just begin in verse 18, as we are reminded that...

I. The Knowledge of Christ Is Complete (18-20)

Look at verses 18-20 to get us started this morning...

18 “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, who has [g]eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this: 19 ‘I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and [h]perseverance, and that your [i]deeds of late are greater than [j]at first. 20 But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

Ok, let me remind you of what is happening in the book of Revelation in chapter 2....

The apostle is on the island of Patmos, where he was banished for his witness for Jesus Christ by the Roman government...

And on a Sunday, John is visited by the resurrected Jesus Christ....

Jesus comforts John, but then tells him that he must write down all he has seen, is seeing and will see and share it with the church...

So, John obeys and the first order of business is for Jesus to speak to 7 actual churches that existed in John's day in the mid 90s AD.

Since Jesus is the Lord of His church, he has much to say to the churches...

And he chooses 7 churches that are near the island of Patmos on what was called Asia Minor...

You can see the map that we have been using for a few weeks to identify these churches...

The first church was the church at Ephesus that was a good church, but was not that loving to others..

The second church was the church at Smyrna that was a good church even though it was severely persecuted...

Then we met the church at Pergamum last week, which was a compromising church...

Thought they were faithful, they had allowed false teaching to remain a part of the church...

And Jesus promised to come remove those false teachers himself unless the church at Pergamum acted quickly...

Today, we go farther down the compromising path as we come to the church at Thyatira...

And I want you to take note of how Jesus comes to this church...

Look at the end of verse 18...

He comes eyes like flames of fire and feet like burnished bronze....

This is the picture of Jesus coming quickly in judgment...

His eyes are filled with the sins of some of the people in the church in Thyatira and He is coming to that church with shining feet ready to judge and purify it...

But even before he gets to the extreme issues in that church, he offers words of encouragement to some of the people in that church...

Verse 19...

19 'I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and [h]perseverance, and that your [i]deeds of late are greater than [j]at first.

There was clearly a group of people in that church who were truly saved...

They had produced fruit of their salvation in their good deeds...

They loved others...

They were faithful to the gospel and to the Lord...

They served...

They persevered through difficulty....

And let's be clear...

It is extremely difficult to be a part of a church where most of the people are unsaved and even practitioners of evil...

But this group of believers were there and Jesus was pleased and encouraged them from the very start of the letter...

And we simply are reminded of what we have already learned in these letters to the church....

Jesus sees and knows everything that happens in a church...

Even if 99 are unfaithful, Jesus still sees and knows the faith of 1 that is..

That is the comfort to us wherever we are in this world or wherever we go to church...

The Lord takes notes of the good and the bad...

Though the bad may get the attention, the good is still noticed and will be rewarded...

So even though, Jesus eyes were like flames of fire, they still saw the good deeds of the faithful group in the church at Thyatira...

But the good was clearly overshadowed by the bad in verse 20...

20 But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

Evidently, the church at Thyatira had allowed a woman to rise to place of great influence in the church...

Though I don't think her name was Jezebel, she was an exact copy of the Jezebel of the OT who had led Ahab, king of Israel, astray.

You may remember her name even if you dont remember her great sin in the OT...

Where she led the king and the people of Israel to worship idols and to engage in magic...

She led them to immoral behavior as well that caused God to bring judgment on the land...

And for that reason, this woman causing havoc in Thyatira was called a Jezebel...

Because nobody would name their baby girl Jezebel on purpose...

In the same way, they would name a boy Judas...

I don't know this lady's name and I guess it is possible that it was actually Jezebel...

But that's not important.

What is important is the place that the church at Thyatira had allowed her to rise...

To the point where she was even saying that she was speaking for God as a prophet...

And on top of that she was teaching sinful immoral practices and even leading people to do these sins from his position in the church...

This is the depths to which a church will sink if it doesn't address false teachers...

Those teachers will get so much confidence and be filled with so much arrogance that they will teach error and even lead people to commit sin...

This lady in Thyatira was leading people to physical adultery and spiritual adultery...

She was probably participating in the adulterous acts herself and leading people to celebrate at feasts honoring false gods...

And Jesus' eyes were burning in judgment at what he was witnessing...

And his feet were coming quickly to end such sinful behavior that should not have been tolerated by the church in the first place....

For as much as Jesus sees good in His church, he also sees the bad, and he will not allow it to go on forever....

So, Jesus' knowledge of His church is complete and he always acts according to what he sees and knows...

But the second characteristic of Jesus that we see here is this....

II. The Justice of Christ Is Sure (21-23)

Let's read verses 21-23....

21 I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. 22 Behold, I will throw her [k]on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of [l]her deeds. 23 And I will kill her children with [m]pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the [n]minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.

A couple things to take note of in these 3 verses...

#1 - There comes a time when the opportunity to repent is over...

This evil and sinful lady had been given opportunity to turn from her sinful teaching and leading of people into sin...

But that opportunity was over...

And when that window of repentance closes, judgment follows...

And in verse 22, Jesus begins to lay out the the consequences of unrepentant sin...

Which leads to the second principle you need to see here...

#2 - Sin does not go unpunished...

Many people sin and nothing happens to them, and it leads them to have the worst false sense of security possible..

Because they begin to think that sinful actions have no consequences, and that is the most dangerous attitude on earth...

I am sure this lady like Jezebel in Thyatira was full of confidence in her teaching and in her continuous sin...

She had probably taught it and committed it so long that she felt like she was invincible...

Yet, what a tragic mistake that is because sin never goes unpunished...

Someone always pays the price the price for your sin..

You will either pay it yourself, or you will trust in Christ and he will pay the penalty for you...

And that leads to the 3rd thing you need to see in these 3 verses...

#3 - The effects of sin are far reaching.

Not only will this lady in the church at Thytira be thrown in a sickness that kills her and sends her to hell...

The people who followed her teaching will also suffer consequences unless they repent of following her teaching..

And then Jesus adds that her children will even die from sickness that he will send upon them...

I don't take this to mean her physical children, but simply the people who had followed her erroneous teaching and were taking it to the next generation...

Those second generation teachers will be killed by disease to demonstrate Jesus' incredible love of his church and the length He will go to keep it pure...

And we are once again reminded of something that we often forget...

Sin goes beyond us and even affects the people around us...

And the greatest lesson from verses 21-23 is this..

The justice of God may be slow at times, but it is sure and it is severe...

So many people see the slowness of God's justice and assume that means it will never come or worse yet, they assume it doesn't even exist...

Yet, I am here to warn you this morning based upon the word of God that His justice will come to every man and woman who rejects Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior...

If you aren't in Christ this morning God's justice may be slow to you, but it is coming and it could be around the next corner...

The Jezebel like lady in Thyatira probably assumed that her teaching was fine, but one day, the bed that she had used to commit immorality became the bed that she laid upon with a terrible disease until she died...

And then experienced the true justice of God because no one escapes it who isn't in Jesus Christ...

A final and encouraging characteristic of Jesus that we see in this letter to the church at Thyatira is this....

III. The Reward of Christ Is Overwhelming (24-29)

Let me just read verses 24-25...

24 But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them—I place no other burden on you. 25 Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come.

As bad as it was in the church at Thyatira, we are reminded that a remnant of God's truly saved people can always be found in the worst of churches...

Though the church wasn't strong enough to keep this Jezebel out of a place of influence, there were people in Thyatira who rejected her teaching and leadership...

And we see Jesus speak to this group of faithful believers in verse 24-25...

Jesus even calls them "the rest."

This doesn't necessarily mean they were a minority, but they simply were overshadowed by dominating false teaching of this lady and her followers...

And I would assume that they were ridiculed for not falling in line and following her teaching...

This is what false teachers do...

They exert pressure on people who don't agree with their teaching by ridiculing and attacking them...

And this must have been happening in Thyatira because Jesus tells this faithful group that he is going to place no more burden on them...

In other words, it was a burden to be a faithful member in the midst of some much unfaithfulness...

So much so that Jesus wasn't going to add to the agony of this faithful group by asking them to do more...

He simply tells them in verse 25 to just hold on until He comes...

And that is the Lord's grace and mercy, right?

He knows the burdens we carry.

He know the persecutions we endure.

He knows the faithfulness we live out.

He knows the obedience we strive for.

And someday, he just wants us to keep on keeping on and just wait for His return...

I was the greatest basketball player in 7th grade, but I made the JV team anyway..

I could shoot pretty decent but I couldn't handle the ball good enough, so I knew I would be on the bench for most games...

In our first game, we were losing big time, and the coach turned to us on the bench....

And he picked me as the first sub to go in...

He called me over and told me...

You are going in first because you always hustle and you never quit...

Don't do anything special; just play as hard as you do in practice.

Look, we ended up losing by 44 points, but it was so encouraging to know that my coach had noticed my faithfulness in practice...

And that he just wanted me to do the same thing in the games that I did every day on the practice court.

Even in the midst of a very compromising and evil church, Jesus was pleased with the rest of the people who were simply faithful to His name...

That is because Jesus rewards the faithful...

He shows grace to those who obey and live the truth..

His mercy goes to those who do the right thing even when everyone else is doing evil around them..

But that is not all of Jesus' reward.

Let's read verses 26-29...

26 He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the [o]nations; 27 and he shall [p]rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also 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.'

We have learned from previous letters that the overcomer is the faithful Christian...

The one who hears the words of Christ and changes his ways and lives in obedience to Jesus' commands and instructions...

For those in Thyatira, the overcomer would be the faithful remnant who continue to refuse to follow the teaching of this evil woman in the church...

It would also include anyone who was following the teachings of this Jezebel, but who saw the error of her teaching and their sin and repented of it..

And began to follow the teaching of Christ...

Today, the overcomer in this room is the true and faithful follower of Christ, who has reopened of their sins and lives in obedience to Scriptures...

The overcomer is each of Jesus' letters is guaranteed a reward...

And look at the reward beginning at the end of verse 26...

I will give authority over the [o]nations; 27 and he shall [p]rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father;

In case you weren't here when we did an overview of the Bible, God designed people to rule this world for Him...

Adam and Eve were given dominion and authority over this earth to rule it for God's glory...

They gave up that right when they sinned against God, yet Jesus earned that right back through his perfect obedience to the Father while on earth...

And the promise of the Bible is that Jesus will return one day to rule this world from Jerusalem...

All the other nations of the world and all the other governments of the world will submit to Christ in that day...

And for 1000 years, the world will finally experience what God desired for it to experience when he created it out of nothing...

And the great promise to every true believer in Christ is that we will rule this world with Christ...

Since we get credit for his obedience to God, we earn the right that Adam gave away in his sinful disobedience...

And we will rule with Christ with the same authority that God has given Him to rule...

Eternity will not be a cloud and a harp, it will be a throne and a rod of iron to rule the nations....

First in the Millennial kingdom which will last 1000 years and then in the new heavens and earth where according to Rev 22:5, believers will reign forever and ever...

This is the promise to the overcomer, to the true Christian, and I think it is one of the most exciting promises of eternity...

To rule this world with Christ is quite exciting and interesting to think about, yet that is the exact promise of Scripture...

But not only will we rule with Christ, we will according to verse 28 get the bright morning star...

So, what is this....

There are a number of thoughts out there on the identity of this...

Some say it is the possession of Christ Himself that will come to every one who overcomes to the end...

I think the morning is a reference to the coming 1000 year kingdom...

To a day that will shine bright in history where sin will be dealt with immediately and righteousness will be all over the earth....

We live in day where people talk about the good old days...

And they mean a time when most people were moral and crime rates were down...

I assure you there have never been any good old days because sin has been in every age and in every culture...

They may just have done a better job of covering it up 50 years ago....

But there are good old days ahead...

And in those days which will last a 1000 years, sin will not be covered up but exposed and Jesus will be King over the world...

And those days will be like a bright morning star against the dark sky of what had existed ever since Adam and Eve sinned in the garden...

And then Jesus end with a something we have heard before...

29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

Many people see this as an obvious truth since everyone has ears we all ought to hear what Jesus has said today....

But assure you, not everyone has ears to hear...

Yeah, you may have a thing on the side of your head called an ear, but that is no guarantee that you can hear spiritual truths...

In fact, there are many in hear today with ears that can't hear a ounce of spiritual truth....

They are so deaf that the quietness they produce while you are in church puts you to sleep every Sunday....

Sure you hear my voice, but you never hear the Lord's voice...

And my voice, like any human voice, will put you to sleep, but the Lord's voice will never put you to sleep because you hang on his every word...

In the same way, that wearing nice clothes to a building with a steeple doesn't make you a Christian, having ears on the side of your head doesn't guarantee you have a word from Jesus Christ this morning...

But if you have spiritual ears this morning, listen to Christ today....

Hear his compliments about your faithfulness...

Hear the warning about judgment if you fall into and continue in sin and lead others to do it...

Hear the promise to you if you keep the faith and press on until Jesus returns....

If you have spiritual ears this morning, thank God for them...

Thank God that he took away your dead ears and replaced them with some that can tune into His Word and understand it by His Spirit...

Conclusion

But let me end like this to anyone without ear this morning...

Let me you the only truth you need to hear from Jesus' message to the church at Thyatira...

Jesus is a compassionate Lord.

Though the Jezebel at Thyatira was evil in so many ways, Jesus gave her multiple chances to repent...

In fact in verse 21, Jesus says, "I gave her time to repent."

That is the mercy and grace of God to give the sinner time to see the error of their sin and turn from it....

And if you are in here this morning with breath in your lungs, your time to repent is now...

God may be giving you spiritual ears as I speak to you right now, and if you can make out anything He is saying hear this...

Repent today...

Turn from your sinful ways and lifestyle and turn to Christ...

Give up your goodness and embrace His goodness...

Today is the day of repentance, because I assure by the very word of God that I just preached....

Your chance to repent will end, just like it ended for the Jezebel at Thyatira...

And the bright morning star of salvation will go out in your life...

And your ears will clog up for the final time and you will never again be able to hear God and respond to his offer of salvation...

I pray that hasn't already happened in your life, but I can assure you that it will happen if you refuse to listen to the call of God...

Dont end up like Jezebel who was sent to a death bed from which she would never get up...

Repent while there is time and call upon Christ to save you...

Let us pray.

