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Sept. 26, 71 P.M. WKRI

THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA

Rev. 2:18-29

This is a most interesting church. We do not have a direct account of the origin of this church in the small city of Asia Minor. It may have been one of Paul's disciples from Ephesus by Lydia. A native of this place, who was converted at Philippi - or by some unknown Christian representative.

It was a (small city), an important trading point, and it could have had easy connections with Pergamos and Ephesus. And the heresy that appears in the last church is also found in this church.

Now in order that you might remember this message - I would suggest you note these four statements in the way of an outline.

- ✓ 1. A Wise Witness - V. 18
- ✓ 2. Wonderful Workers - V. 19
3. A Wicked Woman - V. 20-23
4. Worthy Wages - V. 24-29

I. A Wise Witness - V. 18

To the angel of the church in Thyatira - to the pastor he writes.

And then he declares who is speaking - who the witness is. And he says first of all the witness is the (son of God). And then he describes this witness by saying that he has eyes like a flame of fire and feet like fine brass. And the church is challenged to hear him.

This is the estimate which Christ gives as he describes himself. You remember on another occasion he said he was the one that held the seven stars,

On another occasion he said he was the first and the last - was

dead and is alive. And to the church last week he said, he was the sharp sword with two edges. Now here he says, he is the son of God. He speaks with authority - equal with God. He claims to be the only begotten son of God. Who came forth from the Father. It was because of this claim that the Jews insisted on having him crucified. They said it was blasphemy. We therefore, mistake our Lord, if we fail to consider him as God, with authority over his church. Against his power, no opposition can stand.

Eyes like unto flames of fire - there is nothing more piercing than flaming fire. It penetrates all things and mows down all obstructions. It looks through everything - it goes through a mask of covering. It searches out the most remote recesses. The hidden things of the soul.

Hagar, in her grief exclaimed, thou God seeth me--so the son of God sees everything that is going on in the church. And he sees us. He reads our thoughts. When we think of our faults and our failures, things which are not to our credit - it is a most impressive reflection that it is all naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Now we speak sometimes of secret thoughts, hidden feelings, that live buried in our souls. He sees all of this.

Some people even religious works use the guard of piety to hide what God condemns. Modern society is full of hypocrisy and the people of God in the church are not always free from it. It is one of the arts of our day to cover guilt with smiles, iniquity with fair sounding words, and bad morals with fascinating manners. The piercing eye, the flames go right through that which is false. It may not be in the gaze of man but they cannot impose on Christ. He sees the covetness, the pride, the ambition, the impurity, the malice - all this lies in the secret of man's

soul. These secret sins and deeds of darkness - Christ sees and knows.

How dark must the earth appear to the bright burning penetrating eye of Jesus, to whom all the hidden sins and false things in your life - what a spectacle this will be in the day of judgement when revealed. When all that is in people's hearts will be layed there and everyone will be seen as he is.

Now this should trouble the make believers, the shams, the half ways.

His feet are of fine brass. Now brass tells of strength. Now this means that he is going to be strong. This is a vivid picture, of the mighty strength of Christ to tread down whatever is opposed to him. His eyes of flame will see - his feet of brass will tread down in judgement all that is unholy and impure. The hypocrites and non-believers are all known to him.

Now this brass must have been a product that was produced there in that part of the country. And they knew what he was talking about. He was going to trample that which was unclean.

II. Wonderful Workers - V. 19

I know first your works and deeds or doings. Your love and charity. Third, you faith, Fourth, your patience or endurance. Fifth, that you are working harder now than you did at the first. He tells them there is much good even in the worst of the churches. Jesus found something good there to talk about. They were not totally apostate or corrupt. There were some that really loved and served Christ.

Sodom had a lot. And the snow covered mountains have their humble flowers. So we may count that there are some good in believing people in every respective

but yet defective communion. Jesus has eyes to see. He is not unjust to forget anyone's labor of love.

When Nathanael was hidden away under the fig tree, God knew his secrets. And Jesus observed him. And took note of this. And the good work of his servants, though they may never been made known in the world, those heart prayers he sees and registers them all. These believers here have dwelt in love. They had faith in their work. They loved Christ. They loved his cause and they loved his church.

It is a pleasant thing for anyone to know and to feel that his heart is right, and that he is doing what his conscience approves.

Very good service had been done by some of these people in this church. Where they had opportunity, he did good under all men. And there were many doors of Christian usefulness.

When Christ calls us to be Christians - he calls us to a service. To work in his vineyard, to lay out our talents for usefulness and profit. In order that we might hear, "well done, thou good and faithful servant". But with this love and service - there was also the faith and the patience. Just like Moses who endured seeing him who was invisible. They heard the gospel - they embraced it. They turned their backs on evil and they lived for Christ. They made the choice. There is nothing that pleases Christ anymore than the full faith and confidence in him. Knowing that we are working towards a better country.

Now they were much disheartened - they were hated by their heathen neighbors - there were temptations. They had special conflicts, discouragements within the church itself. And all of this - with the discouraging things which they had.

They were scandalized but they were unwilling to forsake the ship. Though it had so many unclean and unworthy passengers aboard. Through faith and patience, they went forward. Now we are not to forsake the church because there are a few hypocrites in it and pervert the truth and scandalize it by their bad lives. We can never make things better by giving up to discouragements and trials. And whatever the hardship may be.

In spite of the adversities he says, they were growing in their service. What he really says is that their last works were more than the first. People who act on merely worldly principles are apt to do their best first. Having done so and so - they are prone to think that their part is done and they are henceforth to be exempt. It was not so with their saints - they had done well at the beginning. They were doing better at the last. It meant that they were growing in grace.

Now (this) says to us, we are never done while we are in this world. We must always try to do more. It is not that we should work awhile and then sit down and say that we have done our task. There is no standing still in living Christianity. If we have faith, we must work at it, and it must grow or else it will stagnate. We must keep moving and doing - looking back, feeling that we have about accomplished it is not the thing. But we must honestly try to do our duty. To fulfill our calling in Christ Jesus.

Therefore I say, they were wonderful workers - it was a positive church. A working church. It was not a social club or a hospital for religious invalids. It was active, interjectic, aggressive - and its motives were deeply religious. These activities grew out of love, faith, and a ministry of patience. They were not working because somebody was beating them over the head - or somebody had a pitchfork pushing them. But their work was increasing. You remember the church

at Ephesus - their work declined in usefulness. As time went by, their love had dampened and they were instructed to go back and do their church work.

III. A Wicked Woman - V. 20-23

It begins by a few things but it has against them - and the first is, that there is a woman. A doctrine of Jezebel who calls herself a prophet. She teaches and commits acts of immorality and fornication. She teaches them to eat things that are sacrificed to idols. She is also misleading them in the sin of sex and the worship of idols. You would have hardly anticipated this rebuke - but the best of churches are often troubled with very unworthy members. And the worst are sometimes those who are most prominent and most active, and most pretentious.

But Christ is no respecter of persons. He is holy and true. His eyes are like a flame of fire. He searches the hearts and tries to reign. He has no compromise between good and evil. Neither does he allow one to over balance or off set the other. It must be right according to Christ.

Now his accusation here is that the church had been plagued by a woman. Now the church has been much influenced by its women. They personally ministered to Christ while he was here on this earth.

Paul, on special occasions, acknowledged some of the services of the good women who believed. And women in general are more ready to take ahold and sacrifice than men are. A right woman has more soul than a man who has a more tender spiritual sensibility.

But man was made first and so he was meant to stand for the main outer

wanting in man. To be a help-mate to him. She moves with quicker steps, and lighter steps, and softer voice and with gentle persuasion and encouragement, and brightness and love.

Christianity has honored and blessed women as no other religion has. Since the redeemer of this world was born of a woman, the woman was last at his cross, first at his tomb, and the first person that he spoke to upon his resurrection, and he gave her a commission.

But the very qualities which prepare her for usefulness can also be used for mischief. If the church has been greatly blessed by pious women and their service - at times it has been harmed and hurt by the doings of women. Miriam served Israel long as a prophetess. Yet she had a jealous heart and a evil tongue and she stirred up by murmuring and revolt even Aaron and the elders, and it produced a lot of trouble. But God sent his judgement and his condemnation upon this. So this particular evil troubled and spoiled the church here. And it was traced to the activities of a prominent and influential woman.

Her (name) was Jezebel. But she had in real character many things that were evil - bearing the name of Ahab's queen. This woman's qualities had influence over the church. Much like Jezebel over the kingdom of Israel. Because she was the royal priest of Baal and she herself was a prophetess. She engages in obscene orgies connected with the worship of that goddess. Astarte, - she also enticed Ahab to recognize this sinful religion as part of the nation.

It seems that this woman here in the system of things swayed even the minister of the church and found a large influential following. Because she was of forceful character.

In the early days we read about the spirit of prophesy being executed by women and well as men. And at times these women had to have restraint put upon them as was the case of some. Philip, the evangelist, had four daughters who prophesied and it is mentioned to their credit. Other instances, doubtless it was otherwise. But Jezebel claimed here to be given great liberty and prophesied. The only point here made is that her spirit was not the spirit of God. She persuaded herself and others that her inspiration was devine but all the circumstances and facts in the case show us that she was inspired from below - the heathens.

You remember Paul and John both gave rules for trying the spirit to test them whether they be of God or not. Jesus said many will come to me in that day and say have not ye prophesied in my name. And I will say, depart, I never knew you. The false prophets are spoken of as doing great wonders and deceiving many of the dwellers in the earth and conducting many miracles in the last days.

From the days of Jannes and Jambres in Egypt - their powers had run parallel - and these (spirits and medias) that people say they are proud to speak and do marvelous things by the aid of spirits - they do not get their inspiration of God. But it is in the Devil's interest and service. So this is a distressing thing in this church that many have gone to the depths of satan. And they have followed after this woman who has taught them to commit fornication and impurity. And they prevented the Christian calling. So that they thought they had a license to uncleanness rather than to holiness.

Some have held that this was a staff member's wife in the church. She had a prominent opportunity to teach her teachings and so she presented her heresay. Or it may have been some other prominent woman in the church - a leader, who was a corrupt woman and she claimed some special mystic revelation from God.

There are others who feel that this is representative of this taking over of

the church - that the Pope, as you hear much said about the Mother Church. And of course it has been filled with many errors and many of these teachings which have led people astray are put in force today. Many of the doctrines, the holy days, the rites. All had heathen origin. Even much of the Christian church is adopted from the pagan in the way of customs. And the protestant church is not free of all of these teachings. We do not have time to go into a discussion at this point to discuss this. But I sometimes wonder if we took our Bible, if we searched it's pages, how would our church look. How would the Roman church look. If we discovered where the church we worship in came from or originated. You remember through Mass they kill Christ afresh everytime they offer a sacrifice.

In Israel's history during the days of king Ahab, Jezebel knew the art of mixing the pagan with the national religion. And she under took to unite these under one. And there is church power today that would like to unite everything under one head. But if we get the Bible and search it - is there anything in the book like that. No, where does it come from then. We go to the heathen temple - we observe it's ritual - and they are very much the same.

These pagan philosophies were destroying the church and the people were having problems. But we are to test these religious teachers. Beloved, believe not every spirit but try the spirits whether they are of God. Because many false prophets have gone forth in the world. In this ye know the spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that does not confess Jesus - is not of God. I John 4:1-3.

In Lydia, we see women at her best. In Jezebel, we see woman at her worst. Theosophy and Christian Science, Spiritism, these are three great religious apostasies - originated by women. The Fox Sisters, Madam Blavatsky, and Mrs. Eddy.

V. 21 - Space to repent. Time was given this wicked woman and her followers to repent. But she does not want to repent. She refuses to repent. She will make no effort to change her way from the weaknesses that she has.

Now the idea here is that she will not be permitted to continue in this evil. She is going to meet destruction and her followers with her. In the very sin which she engages in.

Now the wonderful works of some of the Christians in the church will not save Jezebel and her wicked work. She may have had false security by being a member of a church - but Jesus said her day of grace has passed. She was unwilling to repent in the time allotted for repentance. And her sin here is not using the opportunity. And she had been attributing the works of Christ to the Devil. Sinning away one's day of Christ's grace is tragic. It is the risk run by every unsaved soul who rejects the Gospel invitation. It may cease to strive with him.

God may say, Ephriam is joined to his idols, let him alone.

Esau sold his birth right and afterwards he had some desire to change - but he found no place of repentance. Though there were often tears shed, he did not repent.

Jezebel crosses the unseen line - that is marked between God's patience and God's wrath. Her doom has been sealed.

Late, late, so late - and dark the night and chill
Late, late, so late - that we can enter still.
Too late, too late - you cannot enter now.

It would seem that this is not the first time that a special warning had been given to the false members of this church. That she had had the space to repent and the sentence against her evil will be speedily. Now God always gives timely warnings before he strikes. His great desire is that sinner may come to repentance. He has long suffering, he warns them, he gives them space to reform. Now the crimes of this world cry up to Heaven. While prophet after prophet has been sent to rebuke them and call ones to repentance.

Remember after God decided that he made man and he was determined to destroy the rebels from the earth, he delayed 120 years while Ennoch and Noah preached to them about the coming judgement.

The sins of Canaan came up before God. He announced this 400 years before the judgement arrived. While Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob witnessed to God in their midst.

Ahab, the wicked king. God raised up (Elijah) to rebuke him, and to give him due warning. There is a point beyond which God's forbearance will not go. And judgement is going to come.

But she repented not. She had despised her reproof and gone on in her wickedness- and she was at the end of her probation period.

V. 22 - A bed of sickness and tribulation. Those that commit adultery with her. This guilty woman and those who were drawn into her uncleanness - is going to cast them into a bed of death. Great dtribution. And this sentence was to go into effect and this woman had children, no doubt, and in a sense her disciples were her children, that she had seduced - and they were all marked for judgement.

It is a fearful thing to indulge in your own lust and pleasure. It is a fearful thing for people in the church to not be what they pose to be. Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord. Adultery, fornication, hatred, wrath, strife, drunkenness - all of these are the works of the flesh and depths of Satan which no man can yield too and retain his Christian hope. This is why he calls for thorough repentance. Out of their evil ways, or they can by no means inherit the kingdom of Heaven.

V. 23 - he specifically says that the children shall receive death. And all churches will know -first that Christ searches the minds and hearts of the members. And second, he teaches that he will give according to deeds exactly as you have done.

There are three parties that are threatened with judgement here. First, Jezebel. Second, those having intercourse with her. And third, her children. Like the bed of a harlot - those who have tampered with evil and defile themselves with association with Jezebel - have been tolerant toward her position - her children are going to suffer this death. And the Lord is going to expose this evil.

The works of each one shall be examined in the light of that day.

V. 24 - Those who have not been seduced by this wicked woman and her doctrine - and have not known the depths of Satan. He has a special word. It was a happy thing for them. They had not gone into Satan's school and they had been content with a simple knowledge of a virtuous life, and a Christian experience.

It is a great misfortune when leaders and active members of the church are not the right sort of people. Corrupt in principle and life. It is a great

draw-back and hinderance. It gives a bad name to the church. Some people take it as suffieient excuse for staying away, or staying out of church. It often becomes a serious burden.

But Christ does not fail to sympathize with those who have to bear it. He requires of us to bear it - and not to run away from it. Not to become indifferent on account of it - not to drop out of our place or our duty because some filthy Jezebel comes along and tries to lead a little group by the nose - but he encourages us to stand fast and have courage and fidelity.

I will put upon you no other burden - this means ~~that~~ that one burden at least was put upon them. Which it was their Christian duty to bear. And they were to do the best they could until God's judgement brought relief.

This means, dear Christian, that you are to endure every inconvenience, snear, or harsh judgement that should fall upon you. For your non-approval of what is wrong - and for your refusal to run with the sinning group and those who have accessive impurities.

The truth is, faithful Christians always have burdens to bear. Burdens which sometimes become very heavy and disheartening. But we are not to give up on account of them. The nets are always breaking - and the ships are always sinking - but as long as Jesus is aboard, we will never go down. We will get to the shore sometime.

~~This~~ is much to dishearten us - in our effort to do things that are right. There are always those who are perpetually fighting. Those who are always indifferent. Those who have an ill temper. Those who lack the persuasion of the Christian spirit. But we must not give way on that account - our duty is to hope, and to pray on, and to work on. Christ knows what hardships and discouragements are upon us. And the struggles we have with burdens, he will

not allow others to come and will not permit us to be tried beyond what we are able to bear.

The Jezebel's - the false ones will not prevail perpetually. The Lord has his searching eye upon them. We cannot improve things by becoming unfaithful ourselves. Like the song says, fret not thyself because of evil doers. Neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. They shall soon be cut down like the grass. Trust in the Lord and do good. The Psalmist also said that he had seen the wicked spread himself like a great green bay tree. And yet he passes away. Forbearance in the church - with those things that impair us - we may know this that Lot lingered with his love loves but it endangered him. And those in the fellowship that are not right - endanger the fellowship. The deep things of Satan. But mark this, the saints were safe. They had rejected these things which were called new teachings. And which were contrary to the divine revelation.

Dr. Samuel Johnson once commented about a certain book that had been published - "What was new, was not true. And what was true, was not new."

Therefore, when something new comes along and it is proclaimed as a new revelation, you be careful. It may not be true. And also don't you be discouraged with what is old. Because that may be the true thing, that you are discarding.

The depth of Satan here seems to mean delusion. Devices that seem to be mysterious. Something new - some mystery.

IV. Worthy Wages - V. 25-29

We have just noted that the is not going to put any heavy burdens upon them. And there are some other things that are going to be their wages - that will make

them wealthy.

< V. 25 - Hold fast to what you have. A glorious reward awaits the faithful. You hold this truth until I come. And give to everyone according to his works. Now death is the reward for the doings of Jezebel. You are going to receive deliverance and the midst is going to be rolled away. Here is an admonition. Hold this fast. Here is a direction to the congregation. Whose business is to keep itself waiting from age to age until he does come. He addresses this to the church - not to just a few people of one church. But to the church of all time. Since everyone has ears to hear - he is to give attention to us as well.

First, requirements respecting this world. The faithful remnant had been doing a wonderful work in the midst of trying circumstances. They were active - they loved each other, and they had service, and were keeping themselves apart from the depths of Satan. They were trying to do their best. We are never done working, watching, praying - as long as we are in this world.

They were to hold fast what they had - what did they have? They had the Word and the Ordinances of God. And these are the very things that you and I have. We sometimes forget how much we owe to the Bible.

Rev. T. Tenel - 80 - Funeral today -

It is great to have the Gospel and to have ministers to teach it. And the Christian influences we have in our homes to influence our habits. To have the throne of grace to go to in our troubles and wants, and in our trials. And a blessed Heaven to live for - as we are compelled to lay down and die. These are not matters of course just to be taken. And there is nothing on earth that can compensate the loss of these rich things.

> To let go of the Gospel is to let go of everything. To become indifferent

is to become indifferent to the Bible and to the church. And Christ

is to let all the great things of your salvation go. We must be faithful he says.

The next thing he says is, you must maintain this conflict until victory. This warfare that abounds in your church about you. The ills and the trials of life. Mark it down that Satan is ever active in all of these things. And we are in constant danger. He is striking at your faith.

Never suffer your interests or your energy in spiritual things to lag. Now these people had a hard time maintaining their Christian character. Even the church had some false teachings in it. And the tendency of the church is to go like society. But he says the victory is going to come if you will hold fast, and if you will press on, and hold to this truth that you have that I will come and give to everyone according to his works.

V. 26 - You are going to be an over comer. You keep my deeds until the end and I am going to give you power and authority over the nations, and I am going to give you power over the heathen. The false ways and the wicked things of Jezebel are going to come to an end. These things of the flesh and the works of the Devil which are contrary to the teachings of Christ are going to come to a close. Now the great calling and duty of the Christian life is what we have in and through Christ by faith. We must hold to this until he comes.

Now this ought to be ample incentative, to go through the hardship and the struggles. If we should die before Jesus comes back - what difference will it make? We will then rest from our labors and the resurrection will find us, as if still living at the time. That coming is the great crowning point. The consolation of our destiny. And the Saviour would have us keep our eyes fixed upon it. You who are struggling in the church have your duties, and your hopes, but hold fast to

that truth.

V. 27 - You are going to be a ruler he says. You will rule with a shepherd's staff - a rod of iron. You are going to be fully compensated - this is going to be something you will receive in the world to come. We are often tempted to drop our hands and say, it is no use. Our best efforts may sometimes appear as just so much thrown away. But it is not so, he knows how prone we are to being déspondant, to being discouraged, to faint. But here is the grandest assurance that the heart can conceive.

First, you note that your salvation will be secure. You are going to share in the victory and triumph of Christ himself. He bore our sins in his body on the tree. He cancelled it with his blood. And having conquered death - he has entered an endless life.

There will be an office of authority - he is going to give power over the nations. What a promise this is - who could have ever thought of such a thing. As that the poor, despised, suffering children of God should rise to the dignity and glory of powerful Lords over the nations of the earth. Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world. The upright shall have dominion over the dwellers of the earth. Psalm 149:5-9, Daniel 7:18-27, Matthew 19:28.

John's vision here speaks of the hereafter. I am sure that the church does not see the transended things which God has arranged concerning them that love him and do his commandments. We talk of being saved - if only we are saved. While Jesus talks about Lordship. And eternal authority and dominion. And the nations - even as he has received from the Father.

This world - God made it, inhabited it, put man upon it, in the present

and he gathers his people - whether dead or alive to be with him. To share in the works of judging this wicked world. And subduing the nations will be wonderful.

The rod of iron is the rod of correction. The shepherd's rod with an iron tip. And a crook at the other end - the shepherd carried these. This was his staff - it was used to break things for judgement and also for correction. And this is the thing that Jesus is teaching his people. He reminds his people that Jonah was sent not to destroy but to remind them that they had 40 days to repent. They had a space in which to repent.

V. 28 - The morning star which was another wonderful part of the wages. This is a new and a strange purposal here. The morning star - the star that leads the heavenly host. Jesus said, I am the root and off-spring of David - and the bright and morning star. Chapter 22:16. This star thing is Christ himself. Christ in his redemptive work. Bringing the day of the final glory and ushering in the triumph of all things.

Live in the light which you have. Wait for farther light on life's dark problems. You shall have it by and by.

V. 29 - Everyone is to listen to what the spirit has to say. Your work in this world is not in vain. For we that keep his work until the end. Discipline, duties, hardships, discouragements attending a life of faithfulness unto God. Let us be stirred up by these precious words in our noble profession.