

EFC

April 14, 2024

“We Belong to Jesus”

Revelation 2:18-29

Good morning, English Fellowship Church. My name is Jeremy, and I’m one of the Pastors here. We continue our series in Revelation (though out of order) by hearing from Jesus as He speaks to His church in Thyatira (and speaks to us, as part of His church today). Just to give you a heads-up, we will look at this letter in two parts, because Jesus has a lot to say to this church – both encouraging, and reprimanding.

As we read this letter, the most important thing to keep in mind is who is speaking: Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, God Himself, who purchased all Christians out of sin and death with His own blood, so that we might in the fullness of life with God.

At the start of each letter, Jesus introduces Himself with specific aspects of who He is and what is true about Himself. In this letter He says it this way: “The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.” (Revelation 2:18)

- Son of God: many in Thyatira worshipped Apollo, who was said to be the son of Zeus, or the son of God. Jesus is making a point: He is the true son of God, not Apollos or any other so-called god we might be tempted to worship.
- Who has eyes like a flame of fire: eyes remind the church that Jesus sees all, and nothing is hidden from His sight; fire refers to judgment (like testing of a material and only the enduring/valuable remains). Jesus not only sees, but He also rightly judges – both for blessing and for punishment.
- And whose feet are like burnished bronze: Highlights Jesus’ holiness, as well as His power (over Apollo), and warns of coming judgment on His enemies.

Pray.

It can be extremely encouraging and uplifting when someone affirms you concretely; especially when it is someone who matters to you.

Example of encouragement by affirmation – just this past week, God encouraged me...

Christ has a lot of good to say to the church in Thyatira, and we should be encouraged as much as these things are true of us – especially since Jesus is the One speaking. We will primarily focus on Jesus’ encouragement to this church this morning.

“I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first.... 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. Only hold fast what you have until I come. The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, 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. And I will give him the morning star.” (Revelation 2:19, 24-28)

Jesus has a lot of positive and affirming things to say to this church! Unlike the church in Sardis, these believers are mature in Christ, and they have real works to show their real faith and devotion to Him. These are some of the weightiest descriptions of what Jesus desires for His church, and they are true of the church in Thyatira!

Not only are these Christians mature, they continue to grow in these things. Example: Michael Jordan

Jesus also commends this church for rejecting false teaching, and not learning the “deep things of Satan.” We’ll talk about what this false teaching and sinful living was in a couple of weeks. But let us not miss the fact that Jesus commends those in the church who have rejected the lies and the sinful living.

Jesus approves their stand for the truth and for holiness, and He encourages them to keep going and not give up, all the way until the end.

Perseverance is important in this letter. He repeats the idea a couple of times: “Only hold fast what you have until I come.” “The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give....” As we’ve talked about from the start, perseverance in the truth and in one’s commitment to Christ is a key theme of God’s message for us throughout Revelation.

Example of the importance of finishing well – couple of years ago, when Eliud Kipchoge was dominating the marathon scene, another runner had an amazing performance. He started the race at a world record pace, leaving everyone else far behind for many miles. But after many, many miles, not too far from the finish line, he was not able to keep it up and collapsed. He wasn’t able to finish well, and I can’t even remember his name. It is vital to run with endurance and persevere to the end.

The Apostle Paul reminds us of the importance of finishing well when he said toward the end of his life, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:7-8)

Could you imagine if Jesus had not finished the saving work God gave Him to do? Do you realize the catastrophe it would have been if Jesus had only gone to the foot of the cross, but didn’t allow the soldiers to kill Him upon it? We would not have a Savior, would still be in our sins, would be lost and without life.

“...until I come... until the end...” Lots of things can keep us from finishing important things in life. We can get tired, and give up along the way. We can get distracted, and end up forgetting. We can lose sight of why it matters, and simply decide it isn’t worth it. We can be deceived, and end up on a different path. We can end up seduced by pleasures, and walk away from Christ.

Any of these things can keep us from reaching the goal. For some things in life, not finishing well isn’t a big deal. But for the most important things, it is of utmost importance. And there is nothing more important than our walk with Christ and our enduring relationship with Him. We

need to live for what matters, live for what endures, live for the One we were created for – all the way until the end. Finishing the race well matters; without perseverance we will not.

I'm really grateful that Jesus gives us positive encouragement to help motivate us to finish well. Motivation is a necessary ingredient for perseverance. Perseverance with Christ costs us something; otherwise it wouldn't require perseverance! Endurance is hard work. Commitment to Christ requires rejection of other things. There is a cost to perseverance, and when we don't know why we're doing something demanding, it's much easier to give up. But knowing what awaits us at the end greatly helps us keep going.

Jesus reveals the wonderful rewards that await us when follow Him in faith and endurance, until the end.

We will be with Jesus, blessed by Him to serve and live like we were created for.

- "...until I come."
 - o He is our treasure: "The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.... You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." (Psalm 16:5-6, 11)
- "I will give..." – just one aspect out of many of the glory of our treasure Jesus
 - o Jesus is generous and desires our good and blessing.

We live united to Jesus, living fully as we were created to live.

- Rule the nations, as Jesus does – because we are united with Christ
 - o Prophesied of Jesus in Revelation 12:5 and 19:15,
- Bring good through our rule – all evil and wickedness will be judged and put down, leaving only that which is good and right and beautiful.
- Genesis – this is what we were created for.

Our suffering and opposition and need to persevere will be over.

- The righteous will rule with Christ in righteousness, and will no longer be oppressed
- The morning star
- Revelation 21:1-7 "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son."

Persevering with Christ is difficult in this world; but the difficulties will end one day, and no matter the cost, it will be worth it, because Christ is worth it, and the life He gives is worth it.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 “For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”

End with an example of something that is totally worth it.