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**Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York**

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**Thyatira's Compromise**

**Revelation 2:18-29**

**Prayer:** *So Father, I just again, I thank you for your grace, I thank you for your goodness, I thank you for the love that you have just poured out upon us, we recognize that; the privilege we have of gathering together as we do, we recognize that; the gift that you've given to us of your word and of your Holy Spirit. And again as we unpack that gift this morning, we pray for the presence of your spirit. We pray you would guide us, direct us and make this of permanent value. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well we are in the book of Revelation, we are at the very beginning, we're looking at Jesus' words to seven different churches and so far we've seen three different churches analyzed and criticized by Jesus. We've seen Ephesus which is a church that did mighty things but lost its way when it lost its first love. We've seen Smyrna, this was a church that had nothing critical said about it as a church, it was just surrounded and persecuted from every single direction. And next we saw Pergamum, which was a church that struggled mightily against persecution while at the

same time it allowed the compromise of Balaam and the Nicolaitans to kind of settle in.

Well this morning we're going to examine a church that also struggled with a different type of compromise. On the one hand there were many things about this church that were solid, that were noteworthy, that were praiseworthy; but on the other hand there were serious issues that Jesus had with the church at Thyatira.

One of the fascinating facts that comes out in the studies of these churches is how applicable they are to our present day even as they deal with topics that are literally over 2,000 years old. Thyatira is a perfect case in point because, you see, this city was very famous for its artisans and for its trade unions. There was as one commentary put it: "Bakers, painters, tanners, tailors, potters, and workers in wool, linen, and metal (chiefly copper); and there were slave dealers." And all of these trade unions, they were tied either to the worship of Apollos or Caesar or other gods and they had no time whatsoever for folks who chose not to participate.

And William Barkley describes the problem for Christians. He says: "These trade guilds had common meals together. The meal would begin and end with a cup of wine poured out as a libation and an offering to the gods. It was in fact the heathen grace before and

after the meal. Could a Christian join in a ceremony like that? Still further, such a meal would almost certainly follow a sacrifice. The token part of an animal would be offered on the altar. The meat of it would be given to the worshipper to make a feast for the members of his trade guild. Could a Christian sit and eat meat, which had been offered to idols? Could he participate in a meal where the meat had already been offered to Apollo or Artemis of Thyrimnus, the local god? Still further, this trade guild feast not infrequently degenerated into carousals where drunkenness and immorality were the order of the day. Could a Christian participate in a feast where drunkenness and fornication were the accepted thing?" (Johnson, Darrell W.. Discipleship On The Edge: An Expository Journey Through the Book of Revelation (pp. 88-89). Canadian Church Leaders Network. Kindle Edition.)

Well, you know, Ecclesiastes tells us there's nothing new under the sun and I was reminded of this when I was reading about it of a conversation that I had years ago with Steve Weingartner. You see, he was working for a large construction outfit at the time and he was also a member of the carpenter's union. And he was saying how time and again the union reps would come by to remind them that President Clinton and a whole host of local democratic politicians, they all looked favorably upon unions and union activity, so he was expected to vote democratic. Well of course Steve knew what

Mr. Clinton's position was on a host of biblical issues and he knew he couldn't vote for him. He also knew that he couldn't in good conscience lie. That's one of the reasons why Steve is an independent contractor today. I mean it's 2,000 years later and the exact same type of conflict persists.

And Jesus tells John in *Revelation 2:18*: *"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. I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first.'"*

So Jesus starts off with the good news, I mean, in spite of the pressures many of the church had -- in the church had resisted the lure of the unions and the trade associations at great cost. And so Jesus commends their love, their faith, their service, their endurance and considering the time that they were in this, this is quite a compliment. I mean not only had they resisted but Jesus tells them that their ability to resist had only grown during this hardship. However, Jesus says there's still issues that need to be addressed. In verse 20 he says: *"'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 practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. I gave her*

*time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality.'"*

I want you to think for a second of all the biblical names that there are for girls. I mean there's Mary, there's Ruth, there's Sarah, there's Rebecca, there's Miriam, there's Lydia, there's Jezebel. Wait a minute. There's a reason why no one names their daughter Jezebel. I mean for thousands of years now that name has been associated with wickedness. And whether or not there's an actual person named Jezebel in the church in Thyatira, we're not certain, but the point Jesus is making is that she bears a stunning resemblance to an historical person who went by that name.

See, way back in Israel's history there was a wicked king named Ahab, and he did just what God said not to do. He married a wicked pagan woman named Jezebel who was given over to the worship of one of the worst of the false gods and that would be Baal. *1 Kings 16* describes the situation. It says: *Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him. And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took for his wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshiped him. He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria. And Ahab made an Asherah. Ahab*

*did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.*

Well Jezebel took Ahab's evil to a whole other level. She accomplished the very thing that the Jezebel of Thyatira was trying to foster and that was a spirit of compromise where no compromise could be accepted. You know, I sound a lot like a broken record because I say this all the time, I say we are in a state of war spiritually. I mean the two kingdoms, the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness, they both recognize that only one kingdom can prevail. And you know, it's only the kingdom of darkness that offers compromise and it's not as a means to kind of allow both sides to coexist, it's simply their first weapon of choice because the darkness cannot coexist with the light. Jesus acknowledged that when he said: *"No one 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 see, spiritual compromise, it sounds very good, you know, compromise is always a thing that people love to talk about but it's something that God hates, and he hates it because he sees what it's worth. He knows it's always the opening salvo, it's always the camel's nose getting into the tent. It's giving an inch in order to gain a mile.

Spiritual compromise recognizes exactly where it's going and the Jezebel of ancient Israel is a perfect illustration. She was the daughter of a pagan king who married into Israel's leadership, and under this guise of compromise she introduced them to Baal worship. Israel, you can keep your worship of Yahweh, we'll just add the worship of Baal, says Jezebel. And slowly but surely she accumulated and cared for hundreds of prophets of Baal and of Asherah as Israel sunk deeper and deeper into rebellion. And you know, Baal was the God of fertility, he's the God you turn to in order to make your crops grow by bringing the rain. And as the nation of Israel went from worshiping God alone to the compromise of Baal worship, God responded by sending them a prophet; he sent the prophet Elijah. And Elijah announces a severe drought is going to take place. It's going to last more than three years.

This is *1 Kings 17*. He says: *Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."* Well true to his word, for three and a half years there's no rain at all in Israel; everything dries up, but the people remain thoroughly divided. By this time the spirit of compromise had so thoroughly worked its way into the hearts of the people that they couldn't decide which god to worship. I mean what started as a compromise ended up in a battle for survival

between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. Elijah the prophet represented the kingdom of light and Jezebel and Ahab through Baal represented the kingdom of darkness. And most of us know the story. Elijah is pursued by Ahab who thinks correctly so that Elijah is the one responsible for this mess, this drought came from him, and when he finally catches up to him, Elijah then challenges him to a contest. He says let's see who the real God is. Well, Ahab accepts.

Elijah announces the contest and his challenge to his people demonstrates how thoroughly they bought into this spirit of compromise thinking that light and darkness could coexist. This is how he did it. This is *1 Kings 18:21*. It says: *And Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him."* And the people did not answer him a word. Well, they couldn't answer because by this point they couldn't decide between the real God and the imposter, Baal. Jezebel had used compromise as a weapon of first choice and it proved extremely effective. And there's a lesson that we need to learn from Jezebel particularly as we investigate the contests she engaged in with Elijah, the prophet of Yahweh.

And so Elijah sets up this very public contest between the prophets



of Baal and God himself. He says each side is going to prepare a bull for sacrifice, and then they'll call on their God to consume it. And so he lets the prophets of Baal go first and they set up the sacrifice and they cry out to God for his fire; nothing happens. Hours go by as they're pleading with their God.

We pick up the story at *1 Kings 18:27*. It says: *And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying, "Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened."* And they cried aloud and cut themselves after their custom with swords and lances, until the blood gushed out upon them. And as midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice. No one answered; no one paid attention. Then Elijah said to all the people, *"Come near to me."* And all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that had been thrown down. Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD came, saying, *"Israel shall be your name,"* and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD. And he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two seahs of seed. And he put the wood in order and cut the bull in pieces and laid it on the wood. And he said, *"Fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood."* And he said, *"Do it a second time."*

*And they did it a second time. And he said, "Do it a third time." And they did it a third time. And the water ran around the altar and filled the trench also with water. And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back." Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God."*

Well what happens next is a lesson to all of us who think that we can compromise with the enemy. See, Elijah knew exactly what to do and while this may seem extreme to us, it makes sense as we see the events play themselves out. It says: *And Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." And they seized them. And Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon and slaughtered them there.* We say, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, why not some restraint? Why not show a little mercy, maybe a little spirit of compromise? I mean, after all, Elijah, you just won a spectacular victory that was right there for everyone to see. I

mean God demonstrated in undeniable ways that he was God and Baal was not. I mean the victory was so one-sided that Elijah is able to heap scorn on the prophets of Baal as they wail for a response from their God to no avail.

So why take the lives of the prophets of Baal? Well, the answer is simple: This was war, and neither side had any intention whatsoever of giving in or giving up. But God didn't stop there. Elijah then goes to the top of Mount Carmel and he prays seven times towards heaven and the heavens open up and the drought ends in a spectacular downpour. It's like the final touch of one of the most dramatic displays of God's power and might. And here's the problem. You see, this is the place where everyone thinks God should be all the time. And the lesson is here for folks who complain that God just doesn't show himself enough for people to believe.

How many times have you heard folks complain, oh, if only God made himself more obvious then people would have a much easier time believing in him. Well, what people don't understand is that God is not interested in producing mere belief because belief and faith are two very different things. You know, you can believe in God, you can believe in the real God, you can believe that God became a man, that he lived a flawless life, that he died and was raised

again in three days and still be headed straight to hell because belief and faith are not the same thing. *James 2:19* says: *You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!* Demons have excellent theology, but it means nothing because belief and faith are two very different things.

You know, after these ten spectacular miracles take place in Egypt and the Jews find themselves, they're marching through a now parting Red Sea. Do you think there were any non-believers in that crowd? I mean, every single one of them had belief, but only a fraction of them had faith. It was only months later that they abandoned the God of those miracles for some golden calves. You see, there's a difference. Faith is a God-given attitude characterized by a certainty of belief that produces appropriate action. Belief is mere agreement with a set of facts or circumstances, and miracles will always produce belief but they will never produce faith on their own. Miracles have the effect of confirming a faith that God has placed in someone or hardening the heart of someone who has not had that happen.

One of the most spectacular miracles that Jesus ever did was the raising of the rotting corpse of Lazarus. You all know the story. After Jesus bids Lazarus to come forth out of the grave there were two completely different reactions among the crowd. *John 11:45*

says: *Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. See, some saw this spectacular miracle and said, truly, this is God in the flesh. Others saw the exact same miracle and said, we have to kill this guy! So the next time someone tells you I can't believe in a God who's unwilling to show himself, take them to this showdown, the showdown between Elijah and Jezebel and point out what happened when God sent fire from the sky to burn up the sacrifice that had been soaked not once, not twice, but three times. People say if only God would show himself. Well, he did. If only God would do a miracle. Well, he did, multiple times. If only God would miraculously prove to us earthbound folks that he's the king of the heavens; he did.*

Well, surely the nation of Israel would now be united recognizing that Yahweh is God and Baal is not. Surely Jezebel in light of the overwhelming evidence of God's superiority will have to concede she's wrong and that a contest with Yahweh was fruitless when the God you're competing with proves to be overwhelmingly more powerful. That's what you'd expect. But you don't understand how the mind of a Jezebel works. And this was the net result, this is *1 Kings 19:1*. It says: *Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. Then*

*Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." See, her reaction to this stunning, undeniable proof that her god had failed was to just double down on her belief, or her unbelief. And instead of conceding, she goes on the attack. Elijah was convinced that a rational person would respond rationally, and he was deeply mistaken, so much so that he fled terrified into the desert. Well, God used that encounter to show the true side of a Jezebel compromise. There's no concession, there's no surrender, there's no defeat, only the recognition that what is sold as compromise is in reality a fight to the death. And once again it's the same two kingdoms: The kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness.*

*Jesus makes it quite clear in his message to Thyatira that the sin of Jezebel is compromise, and the compromise has to do primarily with sexuality. Revelation 2:20 says: 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 practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. 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, 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.*

Jesus says I will throw her onto a sick bed and strike her children dead. Pretty strong words from someone who we are told is the God of peace, love, and kindness. So how do you put those words into context? Well you know, first of all Jesus is not saying he's going to strike Jezebel's physical children dead. Instead he's describing those who adhere to and follow Jezebel as being of the same ilk as her. They are the product of her effort, they're in a spiritual sense her children and worthy of the same consequences as well. And what Jesus is making clear and obvious is that ideas and actions have consequences. The consequences of following Jezebel's footsteps into sexual immorality are literally disease and death. And whether it's punishment or consequence, it's almost immaterial. Just as there were certain laws of physics that you violate at your peril, there are sexual laws that operate the exact same way. Everyone accepts the idea that gravity is a wonderful thing and that it holds us in place on the earth and if we didn't have it, all of us would be spinning up into outer space, we'd all die. But you know, gravity is also responsible to trips and falls and injuries and death. You know, intentionally or not, if you break the law of gravity you're going to pay a price. And the very same principle applies to biology. Break the law of biology and you,

too, will pay a price.

God puts it this way in *Hosea 8*. He says: *For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.* And the wind here refers to sowing something stupid, something worthless. And what God is talking about is what every farmer understands, that's the theory of duplication. Jesus said: *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."* You know, I can take one kernel of corn and I can put it on the counter, it's going to shrivel up and die or I put it in the ground, it's going to produce a plant that will produce hundreds of more kernels of corn; and so it is with foolishness, so it is with sin. Sow something worthless like the wind and you will reap a far bigger harvest than you ever intended. Sow the foolishness of sexual sin and you will find a far greater harvest than you have ever intended.

In days past it used to be syphilis and gonorrhoea; now those two diseases have come back with stunning ferocity and now they're accompanied by far more of a whirlwind. Now it's HIV, it's monkey pox, it's herpes, and these exist not so much as divine punishments but as consequences of breaking the same biological laws. Break the law of gravity you can easily break some bones or die. Break the laws of biology when it comes to sexuality, once again you will



suffer consequences. It may be unplanned pregnancy or sterility or death but it's not necessarily because God has set out to punish you specifically for that but because you foolishly decided you could break biology's laws with impunity. Like Hosea said, sow the wind, you're going to wind up reaping the whirlwind, and that's merely the physical consequences, I mean, we haven't even begun to examine the emotional, psychological and spiritual consequences that come from ignoring or defying God's order. Notice also the kindness that Jesus extends even to Jezebel. He says in verse 21: *"I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality."*

Well, I get that, I look back on my own life, I now recognize the time that God gave me to repent and more often than not that was time that I spent mocking even the concept of God. Remember, this is the same Jesus that has eyes like a flame of fire. He sees, he knows every single thing there is to know about us. And just like he did with Jezebel, he gave us time to repent for which I'm eternally grateful. Jezebel responded the way most respond, by mistaking kindness for weakness, for indifference, by completely ignoring God's warning. *Romans 2:4* says: *Do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath*

*for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. He will render to each one according to his works.*

We have a real hard time understanding this idea of stored up wrath because we think of wrath being nothing other than an expression of anger, but it's not, instead it's an expression of justice. A God who sees and knows everything exacts a judicially perfect wrath. This is a God who tells us in no uncertain terms that the time he's giving us to repent is indeed a kindness, a kindness that should lead to repentance but more often than not it doesn't. God says that the wrath of sin doesn't just disappear into thin air. What God says is it remains in storage. It remains in storage awaiting a time called "judgment day" when every single transgression, every sin, every single idle word is going to be brought forth to a judgment by the wrath of God. Again he says: *But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. He will render to each one according to his works.*

Well it happened to ancient Jezebel this way. This is *2 Kings 9:30*. This is the historical account of what happened to Jezebel. It says: *When Jehu -- he was the new king -- came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it. And she painted her eyes and adorned her head and looked out of the window. And as Jehu entered the gate, she*

said, *"Is it peace, you Zimri, murderer of your master?"* She's calling him a name of another famous contemporary traitor, kind of like we would call somebody, *"You Benedict Arnold."* And he lifted up his face to the window and said, *"Who is on my side? Who?"* Two or three eunuchs looked out at him. He said, *"Throw her down."* So they threw her down. And some of her blood splattered on the wall and on the horses, and they trampled on her. Then he went in and ate and drank. And he said, *"See now to this cursed woman and bury her, for she is a king's daughter."* But when they went to bury her, they found no more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands. When they came back and told him, he said, *"This is the word of the LORD, which he spoke by his servant Elijah the Tishbite: 'In the territory of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel, and the corpse of Jezebel shall be as dung on the face of the field in the territory of Jezreel, so that no one can say, This is Jezebel.'"*

To an ancient culture like hers, this is a fate worse than death. That was just the judgment against her flesh, and her spirit has fared far worse. And that judicial expression of absolute righteousness that has nothing whatsoever to do with anger, that's going to be brought full force against everyone who ignores the kindness of his call to repentance. And again Jesus says this of Thyatira's Jezebel. He says: *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, 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.*

So what is Jesus saying to us? What's he saying to us right here, right now, today? I mean is there a Jezebel touting sexual compromise to us? Well I suggest to you that everyone in this room has one, and she's sitting there right in your living room and she speaks to us from a little box attached to a flat screen sitting on our walls, in some cases taking up half the wall, and for four hours a day on average she's the primary voice of sexual compromise in our culture today. I'm speaking of course of television. Most of us here have seen this voice of compromise grow exponentially as we move from broadcast TV which at least had some guardrails to cable TV which had lowered them till they were almost nonexistent, to now Netflix and other entertainment conglomerates which now can bring pure pornography right into your living room just at the touch of a remote. How do you think Jezebel was able to bring Israel from the worship of the true God to Elijah pleading with the nation to just pick a side? How was she able to do that? Well, the answer is in a word incrementally. That's the way the enemy always works, in steps so small, so patient and so subtle you don't

even know you're going there.

I remember a conversation I had a few years back with a believer, and we were talking about a TV show that featured a lot of nudity. I said to him, I could no more watch a show like that than fly. He said to me, well, it doesn't really bother me. I told him the fact that it doesn't bother you is the problem. I mean I compared to when I was 16 years old and I tried to smoke my first cigarette. I nearly coughed my head off. But I learned after a pack or two that I could smoke and not even cough and I thought that that was super cool but it was my body adapting to the fact that I was going to ignore its warnings. With cigarettes I learned you could take a puff here and take a puff there, eventually you'll stop coughing. It's the exact same way with sexual compromise. You take a puff here with language, you take a puff there with a little bit of flesh, then you take another puff of a little nudity, then you take another puff with a little bit more and everything is done incrementally in little tiny steps so that eventually you grow comfortable with sexual compromise, with what you know you would not have tolerated only a few months before. Before you know it you've grown quite comfortable with things you've got no business being comfortable with.

Here's what I would love to see posted in the front of every single

believer's TV, in a little red border just like the border on the cigarette packs that have a warning. This is what I'd like to see on every single TV, just simply *Philippians 4:8: Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*

See, one thing you have to realize about sexual compromise is it's never static. It's always advancing. And what's thrilling and exciting today very quickly becomes mundane and prosaic tomorrow. Far better to cut it off at the root. I mean there's wonderful things on cable and on Netflix and there's awful things as well. If you feel incapable of discerning which is which, I'm pleading with you to undergo radical surgery, eliminate the source of the compromise while you still have strength, and if you feel you don't have the strength, contact me. We'll work out a plan.

And meanwhile Jesus says to the church: *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.* He says to those of you have resisted compromise which is actually following the deep things of Satan, he says, you've done enough,

says Christ, just hold fast. Don't let the culture cave you in.

And Jesus goes on to say: *'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. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'*

You know, I read these words and the first thing I thought of was this great cloud of witnesses and I thought of the cloud of witnesses just from this church that have gone on before us. I thought of Budd Smith, I thought of Dagmar, I thought of Ashley and Donna Tetter and Rosie Zaorski and Sylvia, and Bob and Helen Sorenson, a host of others. Those are the ones living in the real world now, that's the eternal world. They know what we often forget, that God has promised that we are going to rule and reign with him forever. I can't begin to even mentally unpack what that actually means. Just think about that.

Well here we have Jesus repeating that promise. He says: *The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations.* My guess is our brothers and sisters who are up there in heaven are shaking their heads at the

junk that we go for while ignoring the treasure that's right in front of us. But you know, authority over nations, that's just the tip of the iceberg. We have something far greater in store for us who remain faithful. Jesus says: *"And I will give him the morning star."* The morning star is Jesus himself. It's the ultimate prize, it's the ultimate possession, it's the ultimate gift. It's the one thing that you and I were created for. All of us have within us this deep, deep sense of longing. People fill that longing with good things and bad things. They fill it with family and school and career, with sex and drugs and power, but at the heart of that deep, deep longing is the search for what we were actually created for. And the heart of that is called "the imago dei." We're the only creatures in the universe that were created in the image of God. And because of that we were made with this longing, this deep longing that we somehow can't put our finger on, something that's out there that would fully and finally satisfy the deepest longings we've ever had, but it's still somehow outside of our grasp.

C. S. Lewis said: "If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world." And that other world with its deepest desire, that's what Jesus is offering us. He's the one person alone who can satisfy the deepest longings we've ever had.



He's the ultimate prize for those who remain faithful. And he says: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches." So I want to conclude this morning by a prayer for us to gain and gather those ears. Let's pray.

*Father, you have said, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says," and you've also given us the incredible promise that the Morning Star would be given to us and you are the Morning Star and we praise you and thank you for who you are. And Lord, every one of us walks around with this deep sense of when am I going to be fully and totally satisfied with life itself. That's never going to happen. But we do know, Lord, that once we leave this life we are going to have the greatest joy, the greatest pleasure that could possibly ever happen to those who are faithful -- we will have you. We will have the source of that longing, the source of that joy. Lord, help us to have ears that hear, eyes that are attentive to look first to the kingdom and then to this world. And I pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*