



### Looking Inwards (15 mins) Caring For Each Other

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an **opportunity to share**, not something you have to do, however: 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:*

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



### Looking Outwards (15 mins) Concern For Others

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours; or church, which you would like to share (please be careful not to pass on anything that is **confidential** or which you think the person/people concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?

emmanuel**church**billericay

Phone: 01277 632120 Email: [emmanueloffice@billericaychurches.org](mailto:emmanueloffice@billericaychurches.org)  
Web: [www.emmanuel-church.info](http://www.emmanuel-church.info) Twitter: @EmmanuelCM12

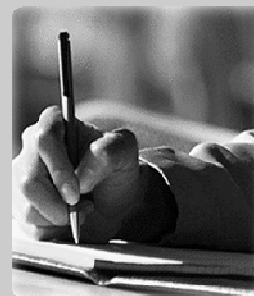


### You've Got Mail: The Seven Churches In Asia HG83: *Thyatira*; *Split By False Teaching*

Revelation 2:18-29

Home Group Study Notes

27<sup>th</sup> October 2013 - Pauline Woolnough



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN  
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION  
**BEFORE THE MEETING!**

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group  
with you, along with any previous notes and  
other resources which might be helpful.*



### Welcome (10 mins) Ice Breaker

Have you ever felt pressurised to go along with the crowd?



### Looking Upwards (10 mins) Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



## Looking Upwards (40 mins)

### Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

**1:** Place yourself in Thyatira as someone needing to work. How do you think you would have responded to the teaching?

**2:** How do you feel when someone says they think they have a word from the Lord? How do you test what you are told and taught?

**3:** Have you ever tried to compartmentalise your life and discovered that there are things about your lifestyle that are incompatible with following Christ?

One of the most prized virtues in today's society is tolerance, we hate to be seen as intolerant in fact the only thing that our culture seems to be intolerant about, is intolerance.. We are careful to respect other peoples beliefs, to treat them with dignity and respect, we are careful not to be critical of how others choose to live their lives, and we want to avoid being arrogant and dogmatic but we have to remain faithful to the uniqueness of Christ and his claims and as Christians we have to acknowledge that our belief in Christ affects our behaviour. We cannot follow Christ and live as if this makes no difference to our integrity and our morality. The challenge for us is to remain a loving community showing concern for others and their beliefs but at all times being loyal and faithful to the truth of the gospel. John Stott says *"Love becomes sentimental if it is not strengthened by truth and truth becomes hard if it is not softened by love. We need to preserve the balance of the bible which tells us to hold the truth in love, to love others in the truth, and to grow not only in love but in discernment."*

The 1924 Summer Olympics were hosted by the city of Paris. Despite great pressure Christian Eric Liddell refused to run in a heat held on the Sabbath and was forced to withdraw from the 100 metres race, his best event. He was given permission to enter the 400 metres, though his best pre-Olympics time of 49.6 seconds was modest by international standards. When the day of the Olympic 400 metres race came Liddell went to the starting blocks where an American Olympic Team masseur slipped a piece of paper into his hand with a quotation from 1 Samuel 2:30: *"Those who honour me I will honour."* Inspired by the Biblical message, he went on to win. He broke the existing Olympic and world records with a time of 47.6 seconds. Liddell would not conform to modern standards or compromise his beliefs, he chose instead to honour God. His story was made famous in the film Chariots of Fire.

The church at Thyatira had been called to repent. To those whose behaviour had crossed that line where it had become unacceptable to Christ he gave the chance to turn back to Him and away from sin. He threatened them with judgement and told them to challenge the prophets deception. They had done what we often can do and that was compartmentalise their lives and live one set of beliefs on a Sunday and then live another on a Monday. We live in the wonderful knowledge that God loved us so much that he sent his Son to die for us but we must never ever take that for granted and only listen to words of encouragement and ignore any challenging words of rebuke. We must never try and tame Christ, He is the all seeing searching One with eyes like blazing fire and feet of burnished bronze. There is nothing tame or domesticated about that description of Christ. The key to the ongoing weakness in Thyatira was lack of discernment and unwillingness to weigh or judge the so called prophetic statements given by Jezebel. After all she most likely said what the people were quite happy to hear but a prophet must always honour Christ and be consistent with his teaching. Her sentence was declared, she and her followers would face the wrath of God if they did not repent, otherwise they would be judged *"according to your deeds."*

### Promise

Not everyone in Thyatira had been misled and followed Jezebels teachings. There were a few faithful believers struggling to survive and the Lord has some words of hope and comfort for them as they struggled to remain in an ungodly congregation. To the overcomers, those who don't get misled by false teaching, God promises two things. 1) Just as God has given Christ ultimate authority over all nations, (Psalm 2.7) he says that he will give this authority to the church and we will reign with him. We don't have to be worried about the world as it presses in on us, He has given us authority over it. 2) He says that he will give them the Morning Star. The Morning Star is Venus, the brightest star in the sky and the precursor to the new day. In Rev 22:16, the morning star is Christ himself. The overcomers are therefore promised Christ himself, the greatest reward of all.

Jesus wasn't attacking the use of prophecy, neither was he condemning her because she was a woman in leadership, he was attacking her teaching. The trouble with this Jezebel is that she was a false prophet and she taught that it was all right for Christians to indulge in sexual immorality and in idolatry. She told them that it was all right for them to go along with the requirements of the guild, because they needed to submit to the pressures of the world around in order to make a living, compromises had to be made. God would understand and overlook this. Her philosophy was business is business, keep your beliefs separate from the workplace. The same attitude abounds today because there are people everywhere who profess to be Christians and have a relationship with the Lord yet live lives open to sin through sexual immorality, pornography, drug or alcohol abuse and so on, we can claim to be saved yet still live as we please.

Prophecy is a gift from God and helpful for the edification and building up the body of Christ but it is a gift that can be misused and falsely used. The prophetess and her followers had lost sight of Christian truths and were all too ready to conform to the practices of their pagan neighbours, because it suited them. We don't serve Christ if we set ourselves apart, and we cannot deny our membership of society but our loyalty is to Christ and his teaching and he urges us to high standards of moral conduct. We live in a pluralistic multi faith culture and therefore face the same problems and temptations that the 1<sup>st</sup> Century church faced. The choices the people had to make are also similar to choices that Christians have to make everyday today especially in the workplace. We can easily find ourselves in situations where we can choose to make compromises but it is impossible to miss Jesus condemnation in these respects. If people deliberately reject the Lord's authority, he is no longer their God.

False prophets like here in Thyatira can be convincing and have great powers of deception. They teach false doctrine that often permit people to commit idolatry and participate in sexual immorality and usually ends in tragedy. Two notable and infamous examples of false prophets in 20<sup>th</sup> Century are Jim Jones leader of The Peoples Temple who described himself as Christ and towards the end claimed to be God and was responsible for the deaths of over 900 people in Guyana in 1978 mostly through forced suicides and David Koresh leader of the Branch Davidians who thought himself to be the last prophet, an angel and an agent of God. It is alleged that Koresh declared he was entitled to at least 140 wives, and that had fathered at least a dozen children and that some of these mothers became his bride as young as 12 or 13 years old. Around 80 members including 20 children died in the siege at Waco in 1993 when the FBI became convinced the Davidians were sexually and physically abusing children and threatening mass suicide.

Members of such cults pledge devotion to their cult leader instead of Christ and believe themselves to be 100% right. They cannot see the deception but when Jezebel led the people astray Jesus held the church accountable. He did not allow them to point the finger of blame solely at her, he says that they themselves are responsible for the decline in morality. His accusation to them is, *"You tolerate that woman Jezebel."*

How, though, can we be sure that everything we hear from those that preach and teach is in fact true and more critical to us as individuals is how well do we know the truth. Do we take everything we hear at face value or do we check it ourselves. There are different views on all manner of topics such as the charismatic gifts, women in ministry and sexual issues. Have we checked scripture for ourselves formed our own opinions. and discovered the truth because Jesus is concerned with the truth. Jesus calls Himself the Truth. He is *"the way the truth and the life,"* (Jn 14 6), he says that *"the truth will set us free,"* (Jn 8 32), and the one truth that is non negotiable, is the truth that Jesus Christ is Lord. There can be nothing in our lives that we place above him. If we have a choice to make we have to choose Him., we are called to be loyal and faithful to Christ.

**4:** Has being a Christian ever made you have to choose between following him and being faithful to his teachings and living by the worlds standard?

**5:** The church today seeks to be relevant and willing to adapt and change to meet societies needs, but is there a danger that relevance can result in conformity?

**6:** Scripture is open to interpretation. Do you think there is enough opportunity for us to discuss current ethical issues such as same sex marriage, abortion, bioethics, assisted suicide and euthanasia, in order for us understand the church's teaching and to have a biblical view on these matters?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



## You've Got Mail: The Seven Churches In Asia HG83: Thyatira; Split By False Teaching

Revelation 2:18-29

### Home Group Sermon Notes

27<sup>th</sup> October 2013 - Pauline Woolnough

#### Setting the Scene

The city of Thyatira was the smallest of the seven cities mentioned in the letters to the churches and the one we know the least about. However, it may have been the smallest but it received Christ's longest letter. It was situated about 35 miles southeast of Pergamum on a major Roman road and trade came from all over the world. There was a Roman garrison stationed there, but its aim was not to defend Thyatira rather to delay any invaders long enough to allow Pergamum to prepare for any incoming attack. It was a military buffer city and was dispensable and as a result it was destroyed and rebuilt many times during its history. Even the smallest city and the smallest church is not safe from the enemy's attacks and here the aim of the enemy was to bring the church into compromise as a result of false teaching. Although it was not a great religious centre it was very busy commercially and known for its trade guilds - there were guilds for carpenters, dyers, sellers of goods, tanners, weavers, tent makers, etc in fact anyone making a living from their trade. Lydia, the trader of fine cloth came from Thyatira.

These guilds may appear to be similar to our trade unions 15 to 20 years ago but they were more than industrial unions and it was very difficult for anyone to make a living unless they were a part of one of these guilds. At their heart were feasts linked with the worship of other gods and they often ended up in immoral celebrations. As a member of a guild you would be expected to attend all its functions and take part in its activities so you can see how the members of the church in Thyatira faced a dilemma as they were torn between making a living on the one hand, which meant having to be part of the guilds, and on the other hand staying faithful to Christ and his standards. What would you do? It was a small church with big problems that faced intimidation designed to cause the believers to compromise their beliefs and waiver in their loyalty to Christ.

#### Greeting

There were serious problems in the church of Thyatira and the Lord comes with a straight talking word that speaks to them and their situation. His first words to this church indicate both judgment and approval. He says: *"These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first."* (Revelation 2:18b-19 NIV) He says 3 things about himself, first he gives himself the title *"Son of God"* He reminds them that He is the Saviour and that He alone is worthy of worship. It is the only place he uses this title in Revelation, it speaks of his deity and it comes from Psalm 2:7 *"I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill."* 7 *I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father. 8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. 9 You will rule them with an iron sceptre; you will dash them to pieces like pottery."* God promises that His Son has authority over the world. He will make all nations His inheritance and everything on earth will belong to Him.

When the church in Thyatira heard the name *"Son of God"*, they would be reminded that Christ has ultimate authority in a world which is hostile to him. Matt 28:18 Christ states *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."*

Secondly, as the Son of God he has *"eyes like blazing fire,"* his eyes see everything, they are penetrating and get right to the heart of who the people are, what they are doing and what motivates them. Thirdly he says he has *"feet like burnished bronze"* - Brass, or bronze in the Bible is symbolic of judgment. Thyatira is the most corrupt of the seven churches and Jesus has feet which can trample sin under foot and punish wrong doers. In this letter Jesus shows his anger and lets them know he is preparing for judgment. He is the Sovereign One, who not only comes as One able to see all, He also comes as One able to judge all.

#### Address

There were some good things going on in this church and Christ commends them for being: 1) a loving church, 2) a serving church, 3) a faithful church, 4) and a growing church - their patience and works were more now than ever. It sounds like the kind of church that we would want to belong to, they were a faithful people willing to persevere, it was a busy active church with many people willing to serve and show love and concern for others. How could Jesus be angry? Why does he use the term Son of God and why is he referring to judgement? Have you ever bitten into a lovely glossy juicy looking apple and found it to be rotten to the core because that would describe church at Thyatira. On the surface it looked great, it was loving and busy and growing, it was successful, but we are not called to be successful, we are called to be faithful. We can be doing all manner of good things, involved in serving, helping others, finding our role and doing it to the best of our ability, but as always God is interested in what is going on inside of us, what are our motives for doing what we are doing? We might still be doing something good... but does God get the glory... does he get the credit for what we do, for we have changed and grown... are we always loving in our approach, are we serving Him or our own needs?

#### Challenge

Verse (vs 20) gives us our answer to why he is angry, it says *"Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols."*

In Thyatira there was a self styled prophetess who was encouraging the church to get involved in the guilds. The guilds met frequently, and when they met they all shared in a common meal. It was really a religious ceremony. They would meet in a heathen temple and eat a meal which would largely consist of meat offered to idols. Of course this was a problem for the Christian and the official position of the church meant that a Christian could not attend such a meal. It was also a problem for these Christians because if they wanted to work they needed to belong to a union or a guild. The pressure was on to attend meetings which involved eating meals cooked from animals that had been sacrificed and dedicated to pagan gods, it involved the worship of idols and these meals all too often readily degenerated into sexual immorality and debauchery. So they had to make a choice.

If the Christian did not conform they were out of a job. They had a way out though provided by a woman Jesus calls Jezebel. That was not her real name but Jesus names people according to their character. Jezebel was the name of the most evil woman in the Old Testament and here in Thyatira a woman like her was a very dominant leader. The story of the real Jezebel can be found in 1 Kings, she was a ruthless, immoral, seducer of the people, and that is why Jesus selects her name for this dominant woman at Thyatira. This Jezebel in Thyatira called herself a prophetess.