

Tolerance

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Preacher: Ian Naismith

[0 : 00] Well, good morning everyone. Can I repeat the welcome that Alistair gave early on? We're delighted to have you with us, whether you're here in the building or at home. And we're continuing today the series where we're looking at the messages from the Lord Jesus to seven churches in Asia Minor in Revelation chapters 2 and 3.

And if you can, it will be helpful to have Revelation 2 in front of you. It will help you to follow what I've got to say. This is the kind of church I want to belong to.

There's a real love for the Lord Jesus and for each other. And that's shown in very practical ways. People have a really strong faith, trusting the Lord Jesus through all of life's circumstances and coming together to pray, not just as a routine or going through the motions, but really as an expression of faith and of dependence on the Lord Jesus.

People are active in serving the Lord Jesus. There are no passengers in this church. Everyone wants to be involved and to do their bit in serving the Lord and serving others.

And they've got perseverance. When they go through difficult times, it doesn't put them off their faith. They don't drop away. Rather, it increases their devotion to the Lord Jesus.

[1 : 19] And there are signs of real spiritual growth. It's not a church where people have been enthusiastic for a while and then have thought, well, take a step back and maybe not work as hard now.

Everyone is doing more than they did when they first became Christians. And, oh no, in this church, there is flirting with other religions.

There is sexual immorality. What's gone wrong? And that's the question we have to ask about the church in Thyatira, which was the one I was describing.

You look at verse 19 of Revelation 2 and you think this is the perfect church. It's got everything going for it. There's love. There's faith.

People are working hard. And they appear to be growing in their faith. And then you come to verse 20 and the following verses. And you realize there is something that is very, very wrong.

[2 : 23] And you have to ask, why is that? Why does the Lord start slating this church, which to begin with looked such a model to all of us?

Well, the short answer is that as soon as you depart from the truths of the Bible, then you're on a slippery slope and things will continue to go wrong. Now, as always, it's a little more complex than that.

And we'll think a bit more about the reasons a bit later in the service. But I think it will be useful to begin with to get a bit of the context of the church to which the Lord Jesus is writing the church in Thyatira.

So we're going to pay an imaginary visit to first century Thyatira. We get off a boat, maybe, around Pergamum, which is on the southwest coast of Turkey, just across from Lesbos.

And we take the road that leads to Sardis. We were at Pergamum last week. Next week we will be at Sardis. And we're taking the road between the two of them. It's not one of the great arterial roads that all led to Rome in those days.

[3 : 30] But it is quite an important one. If we're thinking UK terms, we might say it's an A road rather than a motorway. It was an important road, particularly for trade.

And when we've gone about 30 miles on our journey, we come to the small city of Pergamum, sitting in a valley between two rivers. It's the smallest and least important of all the cities that we'll be looking at in our journey around Asia Minor in Revelation.

Now, as we come to Thyatira, the first thing that we see is an army garrison on the outskirts of the city. This is a military city.

It was first built in the time of Alexander the Great and was built to protect the routes between Sardis and Pergamum. And in times of peace, it was there to protect traders going between the cities.

In times of war, the garrison that was there was a first line of defence. If you've got invaders coming, say, from Sardis towards Pergamum and they get to Thyatira, there's an army there to slow them down.

[4 : 43] Now, they're not going to do it for very long because, as I said, Thyatira is in a valley. It's not in a good position from a military viewpoint. But it probably leaves them long enough to bring in reinforcements from Pergamum or at least to get the city ready for the attack that they know is coming.

That's why Thyatira was built. As we go through the passage, we'll see there are quite a number of military references in it. But let's go into the city.

And the first thing we spot as we get into the centre of Thyatira is that there's a big temple. It's a temple to the local god who's called Tyrimnus, but is actually identified with Apollo, the Greek god. And the worship of Apollo is a big thing in Thyatira. It is the centre of worship for this god Apollo. Not on the scale of Ephesus or in Athens in terms of big temples and so on, but nevertheless is a very important part of the city. And we'll also notice shrines to quite a number of other gods as we move around.

[5 : 50] The other thing that we notice in Thyatira is that there are a lot of skilled tradesmen there. There are a lot of people going about their business doing skilled work.

So there are weavers. There are leather workers. There are potters. There are people working in bronze. And in the first century, that was the key thing in Thyatira.

It wasn't a big city politically. It wasn't a big city culturally. But it did have lots and lots of tradespeople. And the one person from Thyatira many of us probably have heard of is a woman named Lydia, who was Paul's first convert in Europe.

And she was a trader in fine purple clothing. So Thyatira was a kind of upmarket centre for people who went about trades.

And if you were in a trade in Thyatira, you had to belong to the Trade Association or the Trade Guild. It's still kind of the same today. You have trade associations. They lobby for their members.

[6 : 58] They promote the work that they do. And they set standards. And they also have convivial events. These days it might be awards evenings or things like that.

But they have celebrations together. And that was very much part of the Trade Guilds in Thyatira. That they got together regularly and they had a party.

And they would start by making sacrifices to Apollo or to the particular god of that trade and sharing the meat of the sacrifice round. There would be lots of wine flowing.

And by the end of the evening, people's morals had been loosened and they were getting involved in sexual immorality. That was the context. That was what happened in Thyatira.

And that was the temptation which faced the church there. If you wanted to be a skilled tradesperson in Thyatira, you had to belong to the Guild.

[7 : 58] If you belonged to the Guild, you were expected to go along to these evenings and to participate in them. And the Christians perhaps were feeling, well, we're not sure if we should really be doing this.

And along comes a woman who's called Jezebel in the passage. And she says, actually, it's okay. As Christians, you can go and get involved in these evenings and you don't need to worry about it. And how attractive that must have been for many in the church, feeling a bit goate. And then someone comes along and says, it's all right, I've had a message from God. You are okay. You can keep going.

So then three things, just to remind you, it was a military city in terms of context. The worship of Apollo was a big thing. And there were lots of trade guilds, and all of them relevant as we go through.

Before we move on from the context, let's look at verse 18, which I think is part of it. Verse 18, as with all the letters in Revelation, is where the Lord introduces himself.

[8 : 59] And he says here, these are the words of the Son of God. Only time Son of God is used as a phrase in the book of Revelation. The contrast here is with Apollo, who is the son of Zeus, the king of the gods.

So in that sense, too, was a son of God. But this is saying this is the true Son of God, whose eyes, it says, are like blazing fire. Again, contrast with Apollo.

Apollo was the sun god. So he did have, if you like, blazing eyes. And the Lord Jesus is saying here, I'm like that. But the purpose of his blazing eyes is that he can see through all the deception and the hypocrisy in the church.

And his feet are like burnished bronze, it says. Now, there's a nod to the trades of Thyatira. One of them was making high-quality bronze. But it's also, as we'll see later down in the passage, our reference to the power of the Lord Jesus and the authority that he has.

And looking back to Psalm 2, which we'll come to later on. So our introduction, our context, the Lord Jesus gives is very relevant to Thyatira.

[10:07] So if that's the context, we then have the Lord's commendation. Now, we're not going to take a lot of time over this, but let's just note how positive it is.

It's kind of easy to skip over verse 19 and to say, this was a dreadful church. How could such things be happening? But if you look at what's there in verse 19, it is a tremendous testimony to the church in Thyatira.

Love, faith, service, perseverance, and more now than at first. I wonder if the Lord was to look at our church at Bruntsfield.

Could he give the same kind of commendation for us? Is our love for him evident? Is our love for each other? And for those who don't yet know the Lord Jesus, a reflection on that.

Do we live lives of faith and of trusting in the Lord for everything? Are we involved in working and serving the Lord Jesus in doing our part in building up the body of Christ?

[11:15] And when things are hard, when times are hard as they are just now, do we persevere? Does our faith remain strong? Do we still depend on the Lord Jesus?

And here's the real challenge. Are we doing these things more now than we did at first or less than we did at first? Has our love for the Lord Jesus grown and all the other things grown along with it? Or has our love waned, like the church in Ephesus we were looking at a few weeks back? And have we lost something of that initial fervor and zeal and love for our Lord Jesus?

There's a challenge there for us, even as we look at the commendation in Thyatira. But I don't want to spend a lot of time on that this morning because I think it's really important that we try to get a bit beneath the surface of what's happening in the church.

And so we then have the Lord's condemnation. So that's in verse 20. He says, Nevertheless, I have this against you. And what is it that the Lord Jesus has against the church at Thyatira?

[12:27] Well, he says, You tolerate that woman, Jezebel, who is a false teacher. So the first thing that he has against the church at Thyatira is that they're listening to false teaching.

They're not being discerning and recognizing it for what it is. Rather, they're following it. Now, the criticism here of Jezebel is not that she was a prophet.

She actually wasn't a prophet. It wasn't a criticism of prophets. Prophets were very much part of the New Testament church as the full will of God having yet been revealed through the Bible.

We, in that sense, don't need prophets today because God's will has been completely revealed. We have the whole Bible that we can refer to. But in the first century church, there were prophets to whom God revealed things that hadn't yet been written down and become part of Scripture.

And that was perfectly normal. Nor, I think, was the issue that Jezebel was a woman. This is not a passage we look at and say, Well, this says that we shouldn't have women teaching in the church.

[13:33] There are others that would do that. Not this one. Prophetesses were common in the New Testament. We start with Anna right at the beginning of the Lord's life. We go through to the daughters of Philip, seven daughters of Philip, towards the end of the book of Acts.

And prophetesses were accepted, and there's no condemnation of them. As I say, I'm not saying anything here about the role of women in general teaching in the church. But prophets, in fact, Jezebel was a woman isn't really the point here.

The point here is that she was a so-called prophet, but she wasn't a genuine prophet. She was saying, Here is what the Lord has said to me.

The Lord has revealed this to me. And it was nonsense. In 1 Corinthians chapter 14, Paul talks quite a lot about prophets and talks about their importance.

But one thing he says is, You have to weigh up what they say. Don't just accept that everyone who says, I've got a word from the Lord, really does have a word from the Lord.

[14 : 39] And in Jezebel's case, it's very clear she didn't. What she's teaching, that it's okay to get involved in idol worship and sacrifices to idols, that sexual immorality is all right, it is clearly against God's revealed will in the Bible.

You only have to look at the Ten Commandments. No gods and no other gods before me. Do not commit a doubtry. And you can see that what Jezebel is teaching is not in line with the Bible.

How important it is, whenever we get a preacher or anyone else saying, Here is what God says, that we look and see, Well, is it what the Bible says?

Because if it's not what the Bible says, it's not God's word and we can't depend on it. And we as Christians, we need to be like the Christians in Berea who search the scriptures to see whether what was being taught from the front, in this case by Paul, really was consistent with what God has revealed.

Because as I said earlier, as soon as you depart from God's word and you try to take the scripture and make it fit in with what you would like it to say so that you can do the things you would like to do that other people are doing, you're on a very slippery slope.

[16 : 02] Now that's not to say we can't disagree about things as Christians. There are many secondary matters in which I'm sure many people in this church would disagree. Indeed, occasionally at our elders' meetings, we come across relatively minor matters of doctrine where we don't have the same viewpoint on them and that's fine.

But the fundamental truths of the Bible, the truths of the gospel and of our God and of the Lord Jesus and how we win salvation through the Lord Jesus, these are fundamental and they flow into the way that we act.

And if we get away from them, then we will be on a slippery slope to conforming to the world rather than doing the things that we know are right. So we need to guard against false teaching and this woman, Jezebel, was bringing false teaching.

I don't believe Jezebel probably was her real name. It is referenced to Jezebel in the Old Testament, the wife of Ahab, who led the Israelites astray. But I think there was a real woman and she was leading the church in wrong ways.

We need to be very careful to make sure that we stick to the truth of Scripture and don't compromise on it. So the first condemnation is for false teaching.

[17 : 24] Second thing is what I've called dark secrets. Now this is in verse 24, if you've got your Bible in front of you, where the Lord talks about Satan's so-called deep secrets.

What's that about? Well, we can't be absolutely certain, but it appears likely that the teaching of Jezebel went something along these lines.

If you're going to live and be a strong Christian, be a witness to those around about you, you need to understand what their beliefs and their practices are. You need to understand how Satan has gotten to their lives and you need to see them in action.

And then once you've seen that, you'll understand them and you'll be able to witness to them about the gospel. So go along to the dinners. Take part in the sacrifice of the idols.

You know that the idols are nothing, that they're not real. You're not doing any harm if you go along and you get involved in that. Stay on. Have a drink or two.

[18 : 30] You're strong Christians. You'll be able to manage the situation and come out of it well. Or maybe she's going even further. And we know some first century teachers did.

And maybe she's saying, actually, we know that flesh is evil. Our bodies, they're doomed to destruction. What matters is not our bodies, our souls, our spirits. We can do whatever we like with our bodies.

We know the Lord Jesus and what happens in our bodies, that is separate from our relationship with him. Our spirits, our souls are what matter.

Our bodies are doomed to destruction anyway. Flesh is evil. Just get involved however you want to in the activities at these trade guild festivities. Can't be certain.

She may well have been saying something like that. She was saying, you're strong Christians. Our followers were strong Christians.

[19 : 29] You can do almost what you like and it won't affect your relationship with the Lord Jesus. That is really dangerous teaching.

None of us is as strong as we would like to think in our own strength. When I was about 16, my scripture union group from school went for a weekend away to Alowa.

Can't remember who the preacher or speaker was. Can't remember much about what he said. But I do remember one thing. And at one point when he was speaking to us, he said that he was in the habit of buying top shelf magazines from news agents so he could look through them, find anything he thought was illegal and complain about it.

And he said, I can only do that because I'm a strong Christian. Even at that age, I thought this is a really dangerous thing to be doing. Also totally inappropriate to be talking to teenage boys about. But someone who says, I'm a strong Christian, I can do things I wouldn't recommend to other people. Let all of us be aware that we are not as strong in our own strength as we would like to think.

[20 : 45] And it's very, very dangerous if you get involved in things that you would recommend to others that they don't because you think they're weaker Christians than I am.

You are not able to stand as much as you might expect. Paul, in writing in 1 Corinthians, talks about temptations and he says, if any of you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall. And Jezebel was encouraging the Christians in Thyatira to be reckless, to be getting involved in things that they really shouldn't have had anything to do with. And she was putting them in great danger and the Lord condemns her and the church for accepting what she had taught to them. We need to be aware of our weakness and only with the Lord Jesus are we ever going to be strong. Our strength comes entirely from him.

Now I'm not saying don't ever go on a night out with your work colleagues. I'm not even saying don't ever go on a night out with your work colleagues and have a drink or two. But I'm just saying in every situation where you're coming to, where you might face temptation, be really careful.

[22 : 07] If we keep going on the night out, I can recall Christians in many ways who appear to be very strong Christians who had too much alcohol at a night out and got involved in brawls or who said and did things that were totally inappropriate.

They weren't as strong as they thought they were. And there are other situations too we could talk about. It's not just talking about alcohol here. So let's be aware of our weakness and our own self, our strength in the Lord Jesus and avoid the kind of thing that says you're a strong Christian. You're not going to be affected if you get involved in things that are generally unwise for Christians. And then thirdly, the condemnation is for giving into peer pressure.

This comes back to where we were at the beginning. That the Christians in Thyatira were under a lot of pressure to be involved in these trade guilds and in their evenings. And not to be involved probably meant you couldn't apply your trade in the city.

You couldn't be involved in working in it. There was a lot of peer pressure involved. And peer pressure for all of us is very dangerous.

[23 : 21] Then come back to that weekend away. We had an aloha. The other thing I remember from it was that on Saturday afternoon we had some free time. And my friend said, well, let's go to the football.

Now that created a big problem for me. I grew up in Brunsfield. And when you grew up in Brunsfield in those days, football was considered worldly. It wasn't something that you went to if you were a Christian.

I was very jealous of my Baptist friend who was allowed to go and watch Hibs, but I wasn't allowed to go to the football. And that's just the way it was. So I had a dilemma. Should I stand up and say, well, actually, I don't go to football matches.

My church doesn't believe it's right. Or would I go along with them? If I chose not to go, they might think I was a bit strange. I might be left on my own.

They might decide, well, let's go anyway and leave Ian by himself. So there was a bit of peer pressure on me. Now, to be honest, I caved in. I went to the football. I enjoyed the football.

[24 : 17] Allo Athletic beat Sterling Albion 3-0. It was a good game and I've followed Allo to some extent ever since. But I did feel a bit guilty about it because I knew that I was going against the principles that were inherited principles in those days and I knew I was only doing it because of peer pressure.

Now, just to be clear, if any of my children had shown an interest in going to a football match, I wouldn't have stopped them. It's not a matter of principle for me now, but it was at that time something wasn't expected of people in this church.

Now, the peer pressure that I was under was as nothing compared with the peer pressure in Thyatira. I might have my Christian friends think it was a bit strange, but for them, it might be the end of their livelihood.

They might even have to leave the city if they wanted to keep going in their trade. And peer pressure can be something that makes life very difficult for us.

Jezebel and Thyatira offered a way out, saying, you can just go along with it, it's okay, and that was totally wrong. But we will face situations in life where people are saying, well, this is what we do, this is normal in our society, this is normal in our workplace, and people expect us to go along with it.

[25 : 38] And we may say, or may think, well, I'm a Christian, I'm not sure that's the right thing to be doing. And we need to have the courage of our convictions. If we think we're doing something or being called to do something that's wrong, we need to stand up and say, I'm not getting involved in this.

And we'll face all sorts of situations, some of them very trivial, like the one I talked about earlier, some of them perhaps quite serious, they could affect our employment or other matters in our lives. We need to be willing to say, as a Christian, as a follower of the Lord Jesus, I stay within the Scripture and with God's guidelines, and I don't get involved in things that I know are not right. And I don't adjust the Bible to justify what I'm doing, which is what was happening in Thyatira. So the condemnation, false teaching, dark secrets, peer pressure, were leading to a church which, although on the outside it looked fine, on the inside it had gone for most of the church totally wrong. So as the condemnation, let's look at the consequences. What are the consequences for the church in Thyatira of what is happening here?

And we'll go fairly quickly through the remaining verses. So there are consequences for Jezebel and her followers. They face judgment.

[27 : 05] So it says Jezebel had a chance to repent, but she didn't take it, and she's been cast on a bed of suffering. I would take it this is probably fairly literal, that Jezebel had been struck down with some kind of illness and was no longer able to be actively involved in the church.

And the message for those who have followed her and have gone along with her is that they too will suffer a similar kind of fate if they don't repent.

So there is judgment for sin. And we're aware of that. We're Christians and we're believers in the Lord Jesus. That is fundamental to our understanding of the Bible. A God of holiness has to judge sin.

There has to be a reckoning for what we have done. But I think there's a very positive message here in Thyatira because the message is that repentance brings forgiveness.

And our God is a God of second chances. So even Jezebel, even this wicked woman who had been stirring up the church and leading people astray, she was given a chance to repent.

[28 : 12] She didn't take it but she was given a chance to repent and would then have been forgiven by God. The followers of Jezebel, those who had gone along with her, they are being given a chance to repent.

And if they repent, again they can come back into fellowship with God and all the good things that are happening in the church, they can be part of having been restored to the truth.

And for all of us, that's a great message. Repentance brings forgiveness. All of us are sinners. All of us are unworthy before God. All of us deserve to be judged by God for the wrong we've done.

But Jesus died on the cross for our sins. And when we put our trust in him and turn our back on these sins, we can be forgiven. We can come into a relationship with God.

And if we are Christians and we have gone astray a bit and there are things in our lives that we're not very proud of, that we know are wrong, if we repent of them, we can also know God's forgiveness.

[29 : 17] If we confess our sins, says John, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. repentance brings forgiveness.

And then for those who hold to the truth, there's a message of hope. They're under pressure in the church. It looks like the church by and large has gone along with Jezebel and there are relatively few of them who are remaining faithful to the Lord Jesus.

And so the Lord says there's a message of hope for you. I won't impose any burdens except to hold on to what you have until I come. Is this a military allusion here? Remember we said Thyatira, the army would keep the invaders away for a short time while reinforcements came to back them up.

Perhaps that's the reference here by the Lord Jesus saying, hold on, persevere with the truth because that will bring rewards. Verses 26 and 27 are an allusion back to Psalm 2 in the Old Testament, a psalm about the Lord Jesus, about the fact that he is the Son of God and that he is the one who will rule over the nations and saying those who are faithful to the Lord Jesus, those who are part of his work, they too will have that exercise of authority as alongside him. And then verse 28 he says, I will give that one the morning star. The morning star probably is a reference to the Lord Jesus himself, that they will have him with them, they will be with him eternally.

[30 : 51] But the key message there is that faithfulness brings rewards. If we stay faithful to the Lord Jesus and to his truth, then he will reward us for it.

So repentance brings forgiveness for all of us, faithfulness brings rewards. Let me just finish with three analogies from the military.

We've had a military theme a bit going through today, and let me make three analogies I hope will help to remind us of the key points that I was making about the issues in Thyatira.

When you join the army or I think probably any of the military services, you take an oath of allegiance to the Queen. You say that you will be loyal to Queen Elizabeth and to her successors and that you will serve her.

And that oath is an important one. And it's important that people stick to it. If you're in the army, it is your duty to be loyal to Queen and country.

[31 : 58] And if you come across anything that would suggest that others are being disloyal, that there is dissension, that there is possibility of rebellion or mutiny, then you can't go along with that or just accept it.

You have to report it and make sure it's dealt with. So it is here when there is false teaching, when there is in that sense rebellion against the Lord Jesus.

We can't just tolerate and say, yes, it's okay, I don't agree with it, but let's just let it ride. We have to take steps to make sure that the truth continues to be proclaimed.

We have to, as Paul says, guard the gospel. And when you're in the army, you have to be loyal to the Queen. When we are in Christ's army, when we are part of the church, it is our duty as well to be loyal to the Lord Jesus and to serve him and him alone.

Second analogy, when you're in the army, you are strong together. You are a band of brothers. In war, there are often great acts of individual bravery and we rightly recognize and honor them.

[33 : 19] But the army is no place for bravado, for saying, I know this is the way things are meant to be, but I'm stronger than the others, I'm fitter than everyone else, I'm going to go away and do my own thing, I'll go and engage with the enemy myself and I won't worry about what's happening with other people.

The army, you're part of a structure and that structure gives you strength. You're strong together. And in the church, we're strong as we are together and particularly as we are together with the Lord Jesus.

None of us on our own is strong enough to say, I can do things differently because I'm stronger than other people. We need to stay together as God's people. We need particularly to stay together with the Lord Jesus and we need to operate within the structure that we've been given.

We need to operate within the scriptures. We're not to be mavericks. We are to be faithful to God's word and we are strong when we depend on the Lord Jesus.

If we start to depend on ourselves, we're weak and things will go wrong. And then thirdly, we were reflecting earlier that today is Remembrance Sunday.

[34 : 33] And on Remembrance Sunday, we particularly honour two groups of people. There are those who have given their lives fighting for their country in various wars, who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for their country out of loyalty to their king or queen.

And then also, there are those who didn't die but who had life-changing injuries. And we know some of these can be mental as well as physical. So their lives were irretrievably changed by being in war.

And they all signed up to that. When you join the Army or join any of the armed forces, you are signing up to the fact that you will be putting yourselves in harm's way and you may be a casualty of war.

And we rightly think on and honour those who are casualties today. We remember those who have died we give thanks for their sacrifice. We remember also those who had life-changing injuries as a result of being in the war.

And the money we give for our copies to some extent helps to improve their quality of life. When we come to the book of Revelation, the churches in Pergamum and in Thyatira appear to have had similar issues.

[35 : 53] In both cases, there was food sacrifice to idols and there was sexual immorality. The difference was that the church in Pergamum was a persecuted church.

It was a church under great pressure and those who didn't conform to the ways of the city, they could have been putting their lives at risk. The church in Thyatira wasn't in that sense a persecuted church.

church. The pressures were not on people's lives, they were on their livelihoods. And in some ways that is actually almost more difficult.

Without in any way diminishing the sacrifice of those who died serving their country, in some ways for those who survive and who've lost limbs or who've lost some of their mind or have lost other things and have terrible injuries, injuries, it is more difficult, it's a long-term thing and it is a real struggle.

And so the church in Thyatira, they might have said, well, if we were in Pergamum, we would stand firm for the Lord Jesus. We would face up to persecution. Actually, the pressures in Thyatira were maybe just as strong because they were ongoing temptations and they were ones that people could easily over time give in to.

[37 : 18] We don't face persecution in any meaningful sense today. But we do face peer pressures, we do face pressures to conform to the world around us.

Let's, in the battle that we all face if we're believers in the Lord Jesus, let's make sure that we stand firm for Him. Stand firm in His strength and in His alone.

If anyone is not yet trusting in the Lord Jesus for salvation, just take the message that we brought earlier, repentance brings forgiveness and there is a relationship to be had with the Lord Jesus for all of us.

There is forgiveness and hope if we trust in Him. Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for this rather solemn passage we've been looking at that a church can in many ways be doing extremely well and yet at another level it is failing really badly.

Help us to be faithful not just in our love and in our service but also faithful in our lives that when we come under pressure, when being a Christian is difficult, that we don't give in, that we don't submit to the ways of this world.

[38 : 36] and help all of us to have our trust in the Lord Jesus, to be repentant for our sins and to look to Him for our salvation. We thank you again today for those we have been thinking of who have given their lives or have had life-changing injuries in the service of the country.

We thank you for their willingness to be a part of our great armed forces and we pray for your blessing on them. For those who are going through times of injury and perhaps will never be healthy again.

We pray for your peace and we pray for those who care for them that you will give them strength.

Pray for Christians who are seeking to help them as well. For those who have lost loved ones perhaps in the more recent wars we pray that today you will be a comfort and a strength to them.

So we thank you for your presence this morning and we ask for your continued presence now in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.