

HOLD FAST

Sunday Sermon 9/13/26

When the Church Refuses to Compromise

Revelation 2:18–29 — ESV

Main Thought:

Jesus is not looking for a perfect church. He is looking for a faithful church, a church that will love Him, obey Him, and hold fast when the world tells us to let go.

SCRIPTURE READING: REVELATION 2:18–29

Jesus speaks to the church at Thyatira.

Revelation 2:18–29 (ESV)

“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. 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.

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.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”

INTRODUCTION: WHEN COMPROMISE DOESN'T LOOK DANGEROUS

There are some things that don't look dangerous when they first begin.

- A small crack in a foundation doesn't look like much.
- A little water coming through the roof doesn't seem like an emergency.
- A small compromise doesn't feel like rebellion.
- We tell ourselves:
 - *"It's just this once."*
 - *"Everybody else is doing it."*
 - *"Times have changed."*
 - *"God understands."*

But here's the danger: **Opening Warning**

What we tolerate today can become what controls us tomorrow.

And one of the greatest dangers facing the church is not always persecution from the outside.

Sometimes the greatest danger is **compromise on the inside.**

The enemy doesn't always have to destroy a church.

Sometimes all he has to do is get the church to become comfortable with what Jesus died to save us from.

That's where we find the church at Thyatira.

Jesus looks at this church and says, in effect:

- *"I see the good you're doing."*
- *"I see your love."*
- *"I see your service."*
- *"I see your faith."*
- *"I see your patient endurance."*

"But there's something in this church that you have tolerated that should have never been tolerated."

And I believe the Holy Spirit is asking us this morning:

What have we allowed to stay that Jesus is asking us to surrender?

1. JESUS SEES WHAT NOBODY ELSE SEES

Revelation 2:18 describes Jesus as:

“The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.”

Don't rush past that description.

Jesus introduces Himself as **the Son of God**.

This isn't merely a teacher speaking.

This isn't merely a prophet speaking.

This isn't simply a religious leader offering His opinion.

This is the Son of God speaking to His church.

And notice His eyes.

“Eyes like a flame of fire.”

That means Jesus sees beneath the surface.

We see appearances.

Jesus sees hearts.

We see what people do on Sunday.

Jesus sees what happens on Monday.

We see the smile.

Jesus sees the struggle.

We see the Bible somebody carries.

Jesus knows whether they're living what it says.

We see the worship.

Jesus sees the heart of the worshiper.

There is nothing hidden from Jesus.

- You may hide something from your spouse.
- You may hide something from your children.
- You may hide something from your pastor.
- You may hide something from the people sitting around you this morning.

But you cannot hide it from Jesus.

Peter learned that.

Peter denied Jesus three times.

And then Peter looked up

and Jesus looked at Peter.

Can you imagine that moment?

- No sermon.
- No argument.
- No accusation.

Just the eyes of Jesus.

The Eyes of Jesus

Later, when Jesus restored Peter, Peter finally said **in John 21:17 (ESV):**

“Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.”

Peter had learned something.

Jesus knows.

- He knows your failure.
- He knows your temptation.
- He knows your private battle.
- He knows what happened last night.
- He knows what you’ve been thinking.
- He knows what you’re afraid somebody might discover.

But here’s the good news:

The Jesus who sees everything is also the Jesus who can forgive everything we bring to Him in repentance.

His eyes aren't mentioned so we will run **from** Him.

They're mentioned so we'll stop pretending **before** Him.

- Come honestly.
- Come broken.
- Come confessing.
- Come surrendering.
- Because His eyes are like fire and His feet are like burnished bronze.
- The Jesus who loves us is holy, and because He loves us

He refuses to leave us where He found us.

2. YOU CAN DO GOOD THINGS AND STILL HAVE A HEART PROBLEM

Listen to **Revelation 2:19 (ESV):**

"I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first."

That's an impressive church!

Jesus says:

- **I see your works.**
- **I see your love.**
- **I see your faith.**
- **I see your service.**
- **I see your patient endurance.**

And He says their latter works exceed the first.

They're growing!

They're serving!

They're working!

If Thyatira had a church website, it probably looked great.

Programs everywhere.

People serving.

Ministries growing.

Things happening.

But Jesus teaches us something important:

Activity is not always evidence of spiritual health.

- You can be busy for God and still be drifting from God.
- You can sing the songs.
- Serve on the committee.
- Teach the class.
- Give the money.
- Show up every Sunday.
- Know when to stand.
- Know when to sit.
- Know when to say amen.

And still have an area of your life you refuse to give to Jesus.

Jesus wasn't condemning their service.

He commended it.

But good works in one area don't give us permission to disobey God in another area.

- We sometimes bargain with God.
"Lord, look at everything I do for You."
- And God says:
"Yes, but what about the one thing you won't surrender?"
"Lord, I go to church."
- **But what about your heart?**

“Lord, I give.”

- **But what about your bitterness?**

“Lord, I serve.”

- **But what about that secret sin?**

“Lord, I know the Bible.”

- **But what about the person you refuse to forgive?**

We cannot use our obedience in one area to excuse rebellion in another.

A Question for the Heart?

What is the one thing... you still haven't surrendered to Jesus?

3. WHAT YOU TOLERATE WILL EVENTUALLY INFLUENCE YOU

Revelation 2:20 (ESV):

“But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel...”

Notice that word:

TOLERATE.

That is the heart of the problem.

Jesus didn't say everyone in the church was participating.

He said:

You're tolerating it.

The name Jezebel takes us back to the Old Testament and the wicked influence associated with idolatry and turning God's people away from Him.

The problem was bigger than one person.

The church had stopped confronting compromise.

And church, this is where this message gets close to home.

Because we live in a culture constantly telling us:

- *“Don't call anything sin.”*

- *“Don’t offend anybody.”*
- *“Do whatever makes you happy.”*
- *“Live your truth.”*

But there is a problem with **“my truth.”**

Truth and Love

If my truth contradicts God’s truth, mine isn’t truth.

Truth doesn’t change because culture changes.

God doesn’t rewrite His Word every time society changes its opinion.

And the church doesn’t have the authority to edit God’s Word to make it more comfortable.

We are called to love people.

Absolutely.

We should be the most loving people in our community.

But:

Love without truth isn’t biblical love.

If my child were running toward a busy highway, I wouldn’t stand there and say:

“I don’t want to judge his choices.”

No!

Love runs after him.

Love grabs him.

Love warns him.

Love says:

“That road will hurt you.”

And when Jesus confronts sin in Thyatira, He isn’t doing it because He hates them.

He’s doing it because He loves them.

Jesus loved broken people.

Jesus welcomed broken people.

But Jesus never looked at somebody’s bondage and told them to stay there.

He called people to follow Him.

And following Jesus means there are things we leave behind.

- Some habits.
- Some attitudes.
- Some addictions.
- Some relationships.
- Some priorities.
- Some things we once called normal.

Because when Jesus becomes Lord

He doesn't just change where we're going when we die. He changes how we're living while we're alive.

4. GOD'S WARNING IS ACTUALLY AN ACT OF MERCY

Revelation 2:21 (ESV):

"I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality."

Don't miss that.

- Jesus knew what was happening.
- Jesus saw the sin.
- Jesus saw the influence.
- Jesus saw the rebellion.

And what did He do?

He gave time to repent.

That's grace.

That's mercy.

That's patience.

Somebody ought to thank God this morning that He didn't give you what you deserved the first time you failed Him.

- Thank God He gave you another opportunity.
- Thank God He came looking for you.
- Thank God He convicted you.
- Thank God somebody loved you enough to tell you the truth.
- Thank God the Holy Spirit wouldn't leave you alone.

Because:

Conviction isn't God trying to destroy you. Conviction is God trying to bring you home.

- Repentance is more than feeling bad.
- Repentance isn't:
"I'm sorry I got caught."
- Repentance isn't:
"I'm sorry there were consequences."

Repentance

Repentance means:

I'm changing direction.

I was walking this way

but now I'm turning toward Jesus.

Maybe God has been dealing with you for a long time.

And you've kept saying:

"Later."

"Not today."

"I'll deal with it eventually."

But hear me:

Never confuse God's patience with God's permission.

Just because God hasn't dealt with something yet doesn't mean God approves of it.

- The fact that you're still breathing is evidence of mercy.
- The fact that you're hearing His Word is mercy.
- The fact that you still feel conviction is mercy.

Today is another opportunity to come home.

5. JESUS IS AFTER YOUR HEART

Revelation 2:23 (ESV):

"And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart."

Jesus isn't merely looking at behavior.

Jesus is looking at the heart.

- Why do I do what I do?
- What do I love?
- What controls me?
- What am I unwilling to surrender?
- What gets the best of my time?
- What gets the best of my energy?
- What gets the best of my affection?

Here's a question worth asking:

If someone studied your life this past week, what would they conclude is most important to you?

Would they say Jesus?

- Or work?
- Money?
- Success?

- Sports?
- Social media?
- Possessions?
- Comfort?

Even good things can become idols when they take God's place.

An idol isn't only a statue somebody bows before.

An idol is anything that receives what belongs to God.

Prayer of Surrender

Maybe our prayer this morning needs to be the prayer of **Psalm 139:23–24 (ESV):**

**"Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts!
And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!"**

- Search me.
- Search my motives.
- Search my priorities.
- Search my relationships.
- Search my thoughts.
- Search what I watch.
- Search what I desire.
- Search my heart.

And **Lord, if You find anything there that doesn't belong, take it out.**

That's a dangerous prayer.

But it's a life-changing prayer.

A question for the heart

So, ask yourself, If someone studied your life for seven days, what would they conclude is most important to you?

6. WHEN THE WORLD LETS GO, THE CHURCH MUST HOLD FAST

Revelation 2:25 (ESV):

“Only hold fast what you have until I come.”

If you remember nothing else from this message, remember two words:

HOLD FAST.

Jesus didn't tell them:

“Figure everything out.”

He didn't say:

“Fix the whole world.”

He said:

HOLD FAST.

Church, we are living in a world where people are letting go.

- Letting go of biblical truth.
- Letting go of holiness.
- Letting go of conviction.
- Letting go of commitment.
- Letting go of church.
- Letting go of the Word.
- Letting go of prayer.

When Life Presses Hard

And Jesus says:

YOU HOLD FAST.

When everybody else says the Bible is outdated

Hold fast.

When following Jesus costs you something

Hold fast.

When your friends don't understand

Hold fast.

When your family doesn't understand

Hold fast.

When temptation whispers, "*Just this once*"

Hold fast.

When you're tired

Hold fast.

When you've prayed and haven't seen the answer

Hold fast.

When you're walking through grief

Hold fast.

When your marriage is struggling

Hold fast.

When the doctor's report isn't what you wanted

Hold fast.

When your children have wandered

Hold fast.

When God seems silent

HOLD FAST.

Why we hold fast

Why do we hold fast... Because Jesus adds:

“UNTIL I COME.”

Jesus is coming...

- We aren't holding on forever.
- We aren't fighting forever.
- We aren't crying forever.
- We aren't suffering forever.
- We aren't living in this broken world forever.

THE KING IS COMING!

And until He comes

HOLD FAST: but remember, **we are not holding on forever.**

7. DON'T LET THE DARKNESS MAKE YOU FORGET THE MORNING IS COMING

Then Jesus gives this beautiful promise in **Revelation 2:28 (ESV):**

“And I will give him the morning star.”

Morning is Coming

The Bright Morning Star

And in Revelation 22:16 (ESV) Jesus says:

“I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”

The Morning Star appears while it is still dark.

Think about the morning star.

- The night is still dark.
- The sun hasn't risen.
- The world around you still looks like nighttime.

But suddenly...

There's a light on the horizon.

And that light announces:

MORNING IS COMING.

Maybe that's exactly what somebody needs this morning.

- You're in a dark season.
- You've been praying.
- You've been crying.
- You've been holding on.
- And you don't see daylight yet.

But Jesus says:

"Look at Me."

The morning star doesn't mean the night never happened.

It means:

The Final Word

THE NIGHT DOESN'T GET THE LAST WORD.

- Cancer doesn't get the last word.
- Failure doesn't get the last word.
- Your past doesn't get the last word.
- The grave doesn't get the last word.
- Satan doesn't get the last word.

JESUS GETS THE LAST WORD.

And when the Morning Star appears, you know:

A new day is coming.

CLOSING, WHAT ARE YOU HOLDING ON TO?

Jesus finishes the letter in **Revelation 2:29 (ESV)**:

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

In other words:

Don’t just hear the sermon. Hear the Spirit.

Because it’s possible to hear preaching and never hear God.

So before we leave this morning, I want us to get quiet before Him.

Maybe Jesus has put His finger on something in your life.

Something you’ve tolerated.

Something you’ve excused.

Something you’ve hidden.

Something you know needs to change.

Don’t run from Him.

Run to Him.

Maybe you’re tired.

You’ve been fighting.

You’ve been holding on by a thread.

Invitation

Then hear Jesus:

“HOLD FAST.”

- **If you’ve wandered, Come home.**
- **If you’ve compromised, Repent.**
- **If you’ve fallen, Get back up.**
- Maybe you’ve gotten cold toward God, **Come back to Jesus.**

Maybe you’ve never trusted Jesus as your Savior, **Today can be your day.**

Because the Jesus whose eyes are like fire, **also stretched His arms out on a cross.**

- The Judge took our judgment.
- The Holy One carried our sin.
- The Son of God died in our place.
- And three days later

HE GOT UP.

- And because He lives
- There is forgiveness.
- There is restoration.
- There is freedom.
- There is hope.
- There is a new beginning.

And there is a morning coming.

- So, when the world compromises

HOLD FAST.

- When temptation comes

HOLD FAST.

- When the night gets dark

HOLD FAST.

- When you don't understand

HOLD FAST.

- When everybody else lets go

YOU HOLD FAST.

Because the Bright Morning Star is still shining.

Hold Fast

Jesus is still Lord.

His Word is still true.

His grace is still enough.+

His blood still saves.

His Spirit still changes lives.

And our King is coming again.

HOLD FAST UNTIL HE COMES