

A SERIES THROUGH THE REVELATION

THYATIRA: COMMITTED BUT COMPROMISED | 1.27.22

I. THE CITY OF THYATIRA (Rev. 2:12-17)

- A. Along the circuit of the Seven Churches, the Church of Thyatira is mentioned in fourth place. This Church was located about 40 miles southeast of Pergamum. Although this Church was located in the smallest and least important city among the other 6, they receive the longest letter from Jesus.
- B. Thyatira was a small military outpost on the way to Sardis. It wasn't known as a highly religious or political city. The city was primarily known for its numerous trade guilds. Recent findings in Thyatira have unearthed inscriptions that attest to the many trade guilds including; wool-workers, linen workers, makers of outer garments, dyers, leather-workers, tanners, potters, bakers, slave dealers, and bronze smiths. These trade guilds were the forerunner to what we call trade unions today.
- C. Working in Thyatira meant that you joined a trade guild and as members of these trade guilds you were expected to attend guild festivals, eat food offered to pagan gods and acknowledge that the food on the table was a gift from these gods. At the end of the festival there was gross and overt sexual immorality. To leave at this time left you open to serious ridicule and to not attend would possibly cost you your job, reputation, and societal influence.
- D. Thyatira lacked zeal for godly discipline and proper doctrine, but it was also condoning and obliging those who erred in these ways and in turn supported their errors.
- E. The Church of Thyatira (**2:18-29**) was totally opposite of the Church of Ephesus (**2:1-7**). Ephesus had loved doctrine to the detriment of the people and was decreasing in love. But Thyatira loved people to the detriment of good doctrine and was increasing in love for God. *But Jesus doesn't desire either or, He demands both and!*
 - 1. *"The challenges facing Thyatira are the same challenges we face today, trade guilds, or Jesus. Honoring God with my business, with my career, or participate with society and culture. Honor Baal, or honor God, either way, you can't do both. You might not be forced to join in an orgy, but the company trip, the football event, the videos in the break room, the discussion among the team, it very well may violate loving Jesus and then you gotta choose, honoring God, or honor Baal, or the spirit of this age. Dietrich Bonhoeffer rightly said, "the human heart has the capacity for only one, all-encompassing, all-embracing allegiance." -Discipleship on The Edge, Darrell Johnson, Pg. 90)*

II. THE CHURCH OF THYATIRA (Rev. 2:18-29)

- A. **Revelation 2:18** *"And to the angel of the Church in Thyatira write, these things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire and His feet like fine brass..."*
- B. Jesus makes His ADDRESS to the overseers of this church as the primary one's responsible for what's taking place in their midst. Following His address, He then reveals 3 specific ATTRIBUTES of Himself that He previously revealed to John in **Revelation 1**.
 - 1. The Son of God = Jesus is coming to this Church in His divinity as opposed to His humanity like He came to the Church of Smyrna. He is making clear that He has the right and power to intervene in their ministry.
 - a. The reason He is doing this is because the Church isn't struggling with sin; they are practicing sin.

2. Eyes like a flame of fire = Everyone will experience Jesus' eyes like fire in one of two primary ways. For those who are struggling, yet sincere, it will be expressed as tenderness with human weakness. But to the rebellious and unrepentant it will be His fierce resolve to establish righteousness.
 3. Feet like fine brass = This speaks about Jesus' eagerness to step into the affairs of His people and crush sin, rebellion, and compromise.
 - a. Brass in the Bible often speaks of judgment. It's a heavy material that moves slowly until it finally comes down suddenly. In **Revelation 1:15** John saw these feet were *like brass as if they were refined in a furnace*. Jesus' decision is still being made if He will judge or not and it's based on our response to Him.
- C. **Revelation 2:19** *"I know your works, love, service, faith and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first."*
1. Jesus' commends the Church by giving His APPROVAL of a handful of things they were doing well. Only Jesus can look at our lives, see through the sin and compromise and find things that are commendable in His sight. Stunning, simply stunning.
 2. I know your works, love, service, faith and patience (enduring faith) = This is the only church of the 7 that have both love and service functioning in their midst. They are serving others *and* persisting in faith.
 3. The last are more than the first = Unlike the Church of Ephesus who was rebuked for losing love, Jesus affirms Thyatira that they are growing in love.
- D. **Revelation 2:20** *"Nevertheless, I have this against you, because you allow (tolerate) that women Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servant's (My slaves) to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols."*
1. Jesus' approval of their ministry is quickly (*nevertheless*) clouded out by His sharp ACCUSATION of the leadership who is tolerating a woman in their midst that is leading many into sexual immorality. Only Jesus is able to correct us without simultaneously rejecting us.
 2. You tolerate that women Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess = The overseers of this ministry are being rebuked for not correcting and removing this women in their midst. They've cowered to her and abdicated their responsibility to Shepherd the flock of God.
 - a. It's best to see this women as a self-proclaimed inspired teacher. In John's day, a Prophet was just below an Apostle, which carried lots of weight within the body of Christ making it challenging to correct to her
 - b. *To tolerate something means to allow it, let it run freely, give it room or space.*
 3. To teach and seduce My slaves to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed by idols = Jezebel's teaching and notable leadership (*prophetess*) within the Church gave her credibility to teach something that was a fundamental departure from the faith; heresy and a grave error. This same deception is used to speak of the devil in the Revelation (**Revelation 12:9; 20:2,10**).
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- a. Jezebel's teaching was called 'Antinomianism' which is a doctrine that exalts grace through faith, which frees us from the moral laws of the Bible, because we are saved by faith. Her encouragement of believers attending these various guild parties empowered them to sin in the flesh (*defiled food/sexual immorality*) while supposedly not defiling the Spirit. It's the spirit that matters, not the flesh.
 - b. This false doctrine, that will lead many to hell, is a distorted teaching on the grace of God and it's well and alive within the Church today as it was then.
 1. **Romans 6:1-2** "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"
 2. **Titus 2:11** "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age..."
 3. **Jude 4** "For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ."
 - c. Just as the Old Testament Jezebel (**1st Kings 16:31**) was thrown from a window and trampled underfoot by Jehu (**2nd Kings 9:33**), here in the New Testament, Jesus is once again ready to step into the situation and crush her underneath His feet if she doesn't repent.
- E. Revelation 2:21-22** "And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed, I will cast her into a sickbed, and those that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds."
1. Jesus is patient with sincere struggling sinners who stumble over their own weakness yet are genuinely seeking to love God. But He is never tolerant with the rebellious who have made agreement with sin and aren't working to get free. It's common for people to mistake Jesus' patience with our sin as His approval of it.
 - a. **2nd Peter 2:3** "...for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber."
 - b. **Romans 2:4** "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering..."
 2. Jesus expresses His commitment to judge them in three primary ways;
 - a. I will cast her into a sickbed = Jesus makes it clear that He is willing to throw her into a sickbed. The Greek word (#2825) used here literally means *couch for sleep, sickness or bed*. The majority of the times it's used it's speaking of a sickbed (**Matt. 9:2,9:6; Mk. 4:21, 7:30; Lk. 5:18, 8:16, 17:34**).
 1. There is also lots of discussion that this speaks of death, like a deathbed. And it's true, the teacher will receive a more severe consequence than their disciples.
 - b. And those that commit adultery with her into great tribulation unless they repent of their deeds = It's not only Jezebel that Jesus is willing and ready to judge but also those that are participating with her. Whether spiritual adultery or physical adultery the result is the same. She's guilty and so are they!

1. Just as it was for Ephesus and Pergamum, there still remains a way of escape: repentance.
 3. I (Jesus) will kill her children with death and all the Churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts = Jesus makes clear what He is willing to do in order to establish His name among them as the Lord of this Church. Remember, these ones being led astray are His slaves (**2:20**) though they are willfully participating. This is Jesus asserting His omniscience.
- F. Revelation 2:24-25** *“Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. But hold fast what you have till I come.”*
1. For the first time, Jesus gives His ADVICE to a group of people who are being singled out as holding true to their witness of Jesus in the midst of a compromising majority. Jesus’ seriousness can be traced to the fact He considered this teaching the ‘depths of satan.’
 - a. The faithful are assured that Jesus won’t put anything on them more than they are currently facing.
- G. Revelation 2:26-28** *“And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—he shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potters vessels—as I also received from My Father; and I will give him the morning star.”*
1. The ASSURANCE of reward isn’t extended to an elite group people, or a special class of Christians that are superior to other Christians but simply to those seeking to honor God and remain unspotted from this age.
 2. It’s common in our western experience to hear that repenting and putting faith in Jesus will result in an increase of wealth, health and happiness. But what Jesus offers is something almost entirely different.
 - a. For Christians in the Church of Thyatira to overcome they would suffer persecution, public ridicule, the potential loss of their livelihood and be forced to provide for their families without a social connection.
 3. Our understanding of Christ’s millennial kingdom and the age to come are critical foundations as we seek to overcome life in this age. If these overcomers will rule their bodies through the Holy Spirit in this age, they will share in Christ’s ruler-ship over nations in the age to come.
- H. Revelation 2:29** *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches.”*
1. Jesus’ final APPEAL is given with great urgency to the individuals within the ministry that will not only listen to Him, but also obey Him and walk it out.
- I.** Work, family, school, sports, careers, significant others and loved ones can all be lost as we follow Jesus. With Jesus there are no shades of grey. There’s no riding the fence. We are either with Him or against Him.