

Revelation 2:18-29 – The Church of Thyatira

Today we come to the fourth of these churches, the church at Thyatira. Beginning in Verse 18 of Chapter 2, the Lord addresses the angel of the church. Thyatira was located about 35 miles southeast of Pergamum. It was a very small city, but a busy commercial center. It was on a major road of the Roman Empire, and, because of this, many trade unions had settled in this city. Everyone who worked there was a member of one or more trades. There were carpenters, dyers, sellers of goods, tent makers, etc. It was difficult to make a living as a Christian in Thyatira without belonging to the union. This is a factor which will bear upon the interpretation of this letter, as we will see. Our Lord's first words to this church indicate both judgment and approval. He says: **Rev 2:18b - 19**

Notice that he uses, for the first and only time in the book of Revelation, the title the "Son of God." There are people who claim that Jesus never said that he was the Son of God, but here is one of several places in the New Testament where he makes that claim very clearly. This means, of course, that he is stressing his deity. As the Son of God he has "eyes like blazing fire," eyes that can pierce the facades, the disguises, the postures and pretensions of his people and get right to the heart of what they are doing. He has feet "like burnished bronze" which can trample sin under foot and severely punish that which is wrong, if need be. Both are needed in the church at Thyatira.

It is the most corrupt of the seven churches that are presented here.

But there were some good things going on in this church. Our Lord tells us what they are. "I know your deeds [works], your love and faith, your service and your perseverance." Those are related.

1. Works – vs. 19a – There were people in this church that were dedicated and committed to following the letter and the spirit of the gospel and were commended for what they were doing. Those were the people who maintained their Christian witness in the face of hardship and persecution.
2. Love – vs. 19b – Love truly is king in all things. Love was demonstrated by many in this church and many great saints came from this church. Jesus said that the greatest of all commandments was to **"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, strength, and soul, and love your neighbor as yourself." (Luke 10:27)** He also said **"you will know my disciples by the love they have one for another." (John 13:35)** So to be commended for your love was a big deal.
3. Faith – vs. 19c – It requires a lot of faith to do the works the church was commended for and to maintain the love it had. **"Without faith, it is impossible to please God." (Heb. 11:6)** We see here that these people did have the resolve to stand strong in their faith. Today it is getting harder and harder to not be on the wrong side of conversations with a Christian worldview. It is even more critical right now in history to stand strong.

Remember what Jesus said to his disciples, *"if you deny me before men I will deny you before my Father in heaven."* (Matt. 10:33)

4. Service (ministry) – vs. 19d – We are called by God to service. In fact, when we studied the Spiritual Gifts, they were often called "Spiritual Gifts of Service." God does not give us gifts and then have us not use them. They are given for us to use for His glory and His purposes. We need to get that in our minds. Service is outpouring of our love for Christ and what He did for us. Paul said it this way; *"woe is me if I do not preach the gospel."* (1 Cor. 9:16) The people here in Thyatira had opportunity and the knowledge to know and practice their faith. And they did just that.
5. Patience – vs. 19e – The bible uses the word "perseverance". It is defined as "steadfastness in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success." It is also known as "tenacity, determination, staying power, endurance, dedication, commitment, stamina, or single-mindedness." You see the picture here. God is commending them for their ability to keep the "main thing, the main thing." They demonstrated their understanding of the "love" of God with great care and application. They were the example of Christ "loving" others. These were the folks who had Sunday lunch in the gym every Sunday afternoon, Wednesday night, and when ever two or more wanted to get together. They visited everyone who was sick, hurt, saddened by death of a loved one, or anything else that was wrong. They were the "love of Christ in action." However, as we will see in verse 20, this was part of their undoing.
6. More than at first – vs. 19f – Here God is telling the church the principle of "multiplication" is at work in their church. Remember *Gal. 6:7 – "You will reap what you sow, later than you sow, more than you sow."* You see, Love leads to service; faith leads to perseverance. If you love God, you will serve his people. You cannot help it. It is the sign that you love that you are willing to serve. And if you have faith you will persevere; you will understand that God is in control and things will work out according to his purpose. You keep at your work; you do not quit. So here was a church that had many people that loved God and served his people. They had faith in his word, and they persevered. They helped many, and they kept it up. As others then got involved, the church grew. So the deeds, or the works, of the church were far more when this letter was written than when it first began.
7. You tolerate the woman Jezebel – vs. 20 - Evidently there was in the church at Thyatira a woman who was a very dominant leader. Jesus names her "Jezebel." That was not her name, of course, but our Lord always names people according to their character. That is why he often renames people in the Gospels. Here he chooses the name of the most evil woman in the Old Testament. This woman was a teacher and influenced others to be lead a stray. God was angry at Jezebel because of her murderous way.

- a. *1Ki 21:25 (There was none who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the LORD like Ahab, whom Jezebel his wife incited.*
 - b. *2Ki 9:7 And you shall strike down the house of Ahab your master, so that I may avenge on Jezebel the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD.*
 - c. *2Ki 9:22 And when Joram saw Jehu, he said, "Is it peace, Jehu?" He answered, "What peace can there be, so long as the whorings and the sorceries of your mother Jezebel are so many?"*
 - d. *2Ki 9:30 When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it. And she painted her eyes and adorned her head and looked out of the window.*
 - e. *2Ki 9:37 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."*
8. "I gave her time" – vs. 21a – Here is the real truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. God says he "gave her time" to repent. How many times have we asked for or needed a second chance? How many times did we beg God for more time before His judgment? How many times do we push things to the very last minute before we stop and repent? I am reminded of the "woman caught in adultery." God gave her another chance. **John 8:1-11** We should be grateful for every minute beyond our sin to have "time to repent." Somehow we act like we deserve more time and more chances. Even if we have been given that extra time. God will give us time to "get it right" but He will not wait forever. **Psalms 103:9-13** He will not just allow us to continue to "go our own way forever."
 9. "She does not want to repent" – vs. 21b – This is one of the saddest verses in the bible. It says that even after this woman was challenged with the truth, given instruction on repentance, allowed time to repent, she still rebelled and did not repent. How many times has that described us? How many times have we been there and done that? Remember Moses and Pharaoh? Moses told him that he would ask God to take away the frogs that had covered everything. Pharaoh told Moses, tomorrow! In other words he was willing to **"spend one more night with the frogs."** **Exodus 8:1-10** Just like us. We like our sin so much we want to spend just "one more night with the boys, or that girl, or something we should run from." God is a loving God but He does have laws that He cannot break. The truth of this verse is that she could not break free from her sin. It had her in its grip and the hold was so tight, she could not break it, nor would she allow the Holy Spirit break her free from that sin as well. **1 Cor. 10:13** says that we "always have a way of escape."
 10. "I will make them sick" – vs. 22 – This is where we often find that people develop the theology that all sickness is the result of sin. However, that is not truth! Not all sickness is the result of sin. Some is, and maybe some of your sickness is the result of your sin, but not all. Take Job. The bible says, **"There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil."** **Job 1:1** You cannot

interpret what happened to Job as a result of his sin. In fact it was the result of his LACK of sin that caused his problems. Now just because we think we are doing right does not mean that we are. We have to be judged by God as Job was.

- a. Judgment will come – Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10
- b. It is not just the sin with Jezebel, but the sinning along with her – Gen 3:11-19
- c. There are consequences – 2 Kings 21:10-16
- d. Repentance is still available – 2 Peter 3:9

11. I will kill your children – vs. 23 – We do not know if this is a literal physical death of the children of these people or it may refer to the children being brought up in such a pagan home they are never given an opportunity to accept Christ. 2 Sam 12:9-14; Gen. 2:16-17; Many scholars believe that John is referring to the “second” death, not the first death. The first death is a physical death, and the second death is eternal separation from God.

- a. In addition to consequences, there will be a purpose – 2 Sam 12:14; Ez. 13:9; 28:22
- b. Nothing and no one can escape God’s judgment – 2 Chr. 16:9; Zech. 4:10
- c. Judgment will be according to our deeds – Matt 12:36-37; Ez. 18:30-32

12. This judgment is only for those who follow Satan – vs. 24 – God is just. He will judge those who need judging and spare those who do not. Here He is tell the church that if you did not fall for the lies and the deception of the teaching of Jezebel you will not receive any additional judgment other than what the church has already had. Your children will not die. 2 Peter 3:9

13. Don’t give up hope, hold on – vs. 25 – this is a recurring theme through out the New Testament. The early Christians had so much persecution it was easy to get discouraged. God is always asking for the perseverance of the believer. It is the one redeeming value that we all can have. No one can ever that that away from you. It is your will to be faithful, hopeful and to persevere. Phil 3:14; John 14:1-3

14. “I will give you authority: - vs. 26 -27 – All of us seek for value and significance in our lives and in what we do. We want to be useful and productive and in some way make a difference with our lives. It is something we are born with. God told John that to “those who overcome” the temptations of the world and the challenges to forsake His word, and “keep them to the end”, God will reward them authority over nations. Now God also reminds us here that just as He will give “authority” to those who overcome, he will “rule over those who don’t with an iron hand.” This is an example of God’s mercy and justice. Jer. 19:11; Rev. 19:15

15. I will give him the morning star – vs. 28 – to the over comer, God promises His Son, Jesus Christ, who is the bright morning star. **Rev. 22:16**

16. He who has an ear – vs. 29 – Once again as we have seen in the past, God is making a strong case for us to pay attention to all that is written here. If we just think about this as a “story” or a “history” lesson, we miss the entire point. These seven churches represent the problems of all generations and cultures and all peoples. We need to pay close attention to the warnings written to each church and avoid the judgment promised to each one who does not listen.