

THYATIRA: THE CHURCH THAT TOLERATED JEZEBEL
Revelation 2:18-29
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JesusNext #6
S-1612

Last week we talked about compromise as we discussed the church in Pergamum.

Compromise has a good side and a negative flip side. Learning to compromise is a sign of maturity and reality..

One bitterly cold winter night when a young man plodded through the knee-high snow to the home of the girl he was dating regularly. Tonight was the night. He asked her to marry him.

Bring very practical the young woman replied, “When you have several thousand dollars, I will seriously consider it.”

Six months later, the two were strolling hand in hand along the river. He stopped to kiss her and asked, “When are we going to get married?”

She inquired, “Well, you remember my condition. Just how much have you saved?”

“Exactly \$75.”

She sighed and smiled, “Oh well, I guess that’s close enough.”

It is good to learn how to compromise as long as you don’t compromise the wrong things. Compromising our values, morals, ethics, character or bodies is not a sign of maturity.

Today, as we discuss the church at Thyatira, we talk about tolerance. There is a good and a bad side to tolerance.

People should be respected as individuals. We are never to call them names. We are always to treat them with the utmost respect as people who are deeply loved by God. And those who were older should be honored in a special way.

But, on the other hand, there is a flip side to tolerance. Some things should not be tolerated. If you have cancer you don’t live and let live. It will kill you. You don’t tolerate it. You cut it out.

Last week we saw the church that compromised with the wrong things. This week we see a church that tolerated in its midst, the wrong things.

▣SLIDE #: Watch the progression among the churches in Revelation that had problems. First there is the loss of first love (Ephesus). Second, there is compromise with the world (Pergamam). Third there is a tolerance of sin (Thyatira).

When the church fools around with the world it soon takes a light view of sin. When a Christian fools around with the world he or she will soon take a light view of sin.

REVELATION 2:18-29 has a throbbing relevance in this 21st century.

□SLIDE #: Jesus uses the same pattern in all seven letters:

1. He shares a Characteristic of the Christ (Revelation 2:18)
2. He Commends them for strengths (Revelation 2:19)
3. He Criticizes their weaknesses (Revelation 2:20)
4. He offers Correction for their problems (Revelation 2:21)
5. He Counsels consequences for the disobedient (Revelation 2:22) and rewards for the obedient (Revelation 2:23-29)

□SLIDE #: *Revelation 2: 18: "To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.*

Thyatira was the smallest of the seven places. It's 40 miles southeast of Pergamum. Blue-collar town known for trade guilds, potters and bakers and leather craftsmen, bronze smiths as well as the manufacturing of purple dye.

Sentinel town. Advancing army would have to pass through it first to get to the big city. The town was a "sitting duck", if you will. It would be destroyed but it would at least slow the army so the large town could be ready for the invasion. Thyatira was a town they could do without.

Pliny the historian describes Thyatira as "unimportant". But it is not unimportant to the Lord. In fact, the longest of the seven letters is written to the church in the most insignificant place. What happened here is so important that the Lord preserves it through the centuries – for people like us to read today and to learn from.

"Eyes like flaming fire" –

I would have loved to have looked into the eyes of Jesus.

Fiery indignation – caused Pharisees to shrivel up when He stared them down because of hardness of their hearts.

Peter and eyes when cock crowed

RJR – "Beholding Him, loved Him..."

Eyes tie with 2:23 – "Searches hearts"

(Superman's X-Ray vision)

He sees and reveals what no one can see. Christ searches hearts! What God almighty did

An unscrupulous salesman was delivering a bid that his company had made for an engineering firm. He was ushered into the office where he would present his bid to the firm. After a brief introduction, the firm's representative politely excused himself for a minute.

The shady salesman quickly noticed the bid of his competitor lying on the desk. Unfortunately, there was a cold drink covering up the total amount. He gazed out into the inner office and noticed there was nobody to see him sneak a peek. He lifted the Coke and got the surprise of his life. Rather than a cold drink, it was a bottomless can filled with BBs. The quiet office was filled with a sound of BBs racing across the desk and spilling on to the floor. The firm's representative then returned to the office and showed the dishonest salesman the door. Jesus says, "I know what is going on." Like, momma knows everything.

Many think God can't see and won't judge.
"Feet like Burnished Bronze" – READ REVELATION 19:15 – feet tread out wine press

Here we have a judge who is all-seeing and authoritative and pure, who is God Himself. Now He reveals what He has seen.

▣SLIDE #: Revelation 2: 19: I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.

5 sterling qualities: They had all that Ephesus had—and love. Beautiful garden in which fairest of Christian graces blossomed – faith, hope, and love. Marks of true Christian church.

I am especially attracted to the last phrase, "You are now doing more than you did at first."

What does that mean? I'll illustrate it by pointing out the opposite. Many churches live in the past – the glory days of yesteryear... Today it's a little dead. Pictures of former pastors. The organist is playing, "The way we were..." for the offertory. It's all about how great it was then.

Thyatira is not like that at all. Their dreams were greater than their memories. What they had in front of them was even greater than their history.

I always want that said about Casas. I never want us to live in the past – as much as we respect our heritage and remember our roots and simple, almost child-like beginnings. How great it was, but it is better now and how much better it will become. Casas Camelot: Stewardship fundraiser when we didn't even need any funds: all bills paid.

Chuck Swindoll: characteristics about churches like that

▣SLIDE #: 1.They stay excited about the truth.

2.They love youth and encourage the young to grow
(millennialists, generation X, Glenn, Julie's song writers for Casas' sound)

3. Their eyes remain fixed on the Lord. They don't follow one man.

It isn't about personality worship. It's about what the Lord is doing. The focus stays on Christ.

Henry Ward Beecher – pastored at the Plymouth Congregational Church in Brooklyn for 40 years. 1847-1887 at his death.

Not uncommon for curiosity seekers to come hear him preach. He delivered dynamic sermons which were witty and insightful. Congregation on edge of their seats. He became world famous. Church known as Henry Ward Beecher's church.

On one occasion his brother Thomas was asked to substitute for him in the pulpit. When Thomas Beecher appeared instead of Henry Ward Beecher, some people frowned, and shook their head and sadly got up and started for the door.

Thomas has enough presence of mind to raise his hand and ask for silence, and that whoever was walking please stop and listen. He said, "All those who came here this morning to worship Henry Ward Beecher may exit from the church. All those who came to worship the Lord our God may remain."

That has a way of getting people to sit back down, doesn't it?

Thyatira had a good focus on Jesus.

▮SLIDE #: Revelation 2: 20-21: Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling.

Who is this Jezebel? Need some OT background.

1 Kings 16-21. You'll read of a woman who was the daughter of Ethbaal, the King of Sidon.

Jezebel grew up in an idolatrous family. When she grew up Ahab was attracted to her and married her and with her came her prophets and idolatrous cult. She introduced Astarte and the mother-child cult and developed the idolatry to Baal.

Jezebel probably dedicated by her father in the temple of Astarte. Perhaps a temple priestess. Abused by dad. Given away.

Jezebel dominated Ahab's life. She ruled the house. She was clever but wicked. Intimidated Elijah. Killed Naboth.

▮SLIDE #: Who is the Jezebel in Thyatira?

1."The Pastor's wife" – some manuscripts <gune> - can be "your wife".

Wife of the bishop – How many pastor's wives have caused trouble in the church?

2. There was a woman teaching and living this kind of lifestyle in Thyatira.

Jezebel probably wasn't her real name. I can't imagine anyone naming a child Jezebel. Her real name may have been Mary – but she was Jezebel to God!

By the way, Jezebel means, “will not be husbanded.”

The teaching of Jezebel centered around false doctrines, idolatry, sexual immorality and poor ethics.

□SLIDE #: The Jezebel Spirit is a threat to churches of every generation:

1. Rebellion against authority
2. Seduction to undermine and control established authority
3. Rationalization of sin (“We love each other so it must be ok.” “Since God forgives we can commit sin because He has to forgive us.”)

King Ahab failed to lead Israel to worship the real God. He led Israel into idolatry.

King Ahab failed to properly lead and guide his wife.

In Thyatira the church elders failed to stamp out her false teaching, sin and idolatry.

In Thyatira the church elders failed to properly lead and guide the woman prophetess and bring her under subjection and control.

Message to the Elders: Elders are to expose and eliminate sin.

Casas' ministers and elders do this work. You may not hear much about it because we try only to deal with the ones who are affected in their group. The larger their sphere of influence, the larger group we must deal with.

We have had ministers in moral failure and the broken trust cost them their jobs. And we shared it with the entire church. We have individuals in moral and ethical failure and we share it only with their small group. By the way, all three are again fully functioning in profitable ministry.

Galatians 6:1-2: When the spiritual ones see a sinning brother or sister we must gently rebuke him and deal with him and restore him in love.

Spiritual leaders deal with the sinning members. You deal with your own sin and love everyone else.

The idea that the behavior of others is up for evaluation is not popular in today's society.

“New tolerance” today means that every individual's beliefs, values, lifestyle and perception of truth claims are equally valid.

Today tolerance means that we were obligated to accept or approve of or participate in everyone's beliefs, or behaviors.

Tolerance today means that there is no need for discernment because everyone's idea, opinion, value, lifestyle is all right and not to be questioned.

Today's teaching leaves the impression that all truth is relative. There are no absolutes and in fact, if you embrace absolutes which cause you to be discerning and discriminating in what you agree or disagree with, there are names for you. You may have heard them.

▣SLIDE #: Nonagreement is seen as phobia.

Nonconformity is seen as judgmental.

Personal convictions are seen as fanaticism.

Christian creeds and prayers and symbols and literature are tagged discriminatory.

Those who embrace that kind of nonsense are the first ones to use labels – ugly terms toward those who disagree with them in their new idea of tolerance.

You will be called bigoted, hatemonger, even hostile, old-fashioned, self-righteous, judgmental, and exclusive (*and my general response to that, given the source, is, "Thank you!"*)

When a father protested the content of the sex education his young son was receiving in public school, he was written about in the local newspaper. The article included, "When I complained that my elementary school son was too young to understand homosexuality, they called me a 'homophobe'. They wouldn't listen. They just called me names."

We have a society which will tolerate anything in its midst – except those who have convictions and values and who dare to express them.

Take full note on verses 22-23 in case you're a little weak on judgment.

▣SLIDE #: *Revelation 2: 22: So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways.*

▣SLIDE #: *Revelation 2: 23: I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.*

▣SLIDE #: Principle I hope you never forget. "Salvation is always according to faith. Judgment is always according to works."

He will severely discipline them according to their works – their deeds.

God disciplines his kids in this life. He does not touch Satan's kids. He will deal with Satan's children in the next life.

Ananias and Sapphira sinned and God struck them dead on the spot. Word got around and it purified the ranks. Believe me, it kept the tares out. Folks said, “Don’t join that church! One goof and you’re dead!”

Physical punishment

1 Corinthians 11. 1 John 5:16.

Hebrews 10:26-31

God gave Jezebel a chance to repent and make things right.

God wants all to repent (2 Peter 3:9). Jezebel didn’t wish to repent. She’ll get sick.

Jezebel eaten by dogs (2 Kings 9).

Reminds me: A slovenly-dressed soldier appeared before his commander, Alexander the Great. The mighty leader asked the soldier for his name. The unimpressive soldier responded, “Alexander, sir.” Alexander the Great commanded, “Change your name or change your ways.” With the title of Christian comes a level of excellence that must be observed.

Kill her children: “Sins of the parents visited to the third and fourth generation.

I love it that before He finishes the letter he has words of encouragement for those who weren’t caught up in this – maybe who didn’t know what to do about it.

SLIDE #: Revelation 2: 24: Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan’s so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you):

Deep things of Satan – Horoscopes, astrology, spirit guides, etc.

Contrast to deep things of God – Romans 11:33; 1 Corinthians 2:10; Ephesians 3:18

SLIDE #: Revelation 2: 25: Only hold on to what you have until I come.

What do we have?

Love, perseverance, service, faith

Christ’s promise to the congregation

SLIDE #: Revelation 2: 26: To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations--

SLIDE #: Revelation 2: 27: 'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery'-- just as I have received authority from my Father.

I will give authority over nations

Quotes Psalm 2:8-9

When His Kingdom is established on earth for a thousand years we will return and assist with Him in the governing of the nations as He serves as the King of Kings.

▣SLIDE #: Revelation 2: 28: I will also give him the morning star.

▣SLIDE #: What is morning star?

1. The Resurrection – as morning star rises after night, so Christ rose after night of death.
2. The Conquest of Satan Lucifer means “morning star” –
3. The Promised glory that comes to the righteous (Daniel 12:3)
4. Christ: “I am the bright and morning star (Revelation 22:16)

▣SLIDE #: Revelation 2: 29: He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

▣SLIDE #: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME?

▣SLIDE #: The qualities that we want in the church are the same qualities we want in our own lives. The sins that we cannot tolerate in the church are the same sins we cannot tolerate in our own lives.

We want the love, faith, perseverance,

Dizzy Dean’s big toe

▣SLIDE #: The Christian life is one of growing to maturity. We want to be doing more now than we did at first.

This is our responsibility

▣SLIDE #: A.W. Tozer: “Every man (or woman) is just as spiritual as he (or she) wants to be.”

▣SLIDE #: We must uphold Biblical truth and values at all costs while remembering that sinful, hurting people are often the victims of sin—not an enemy to defeat.

When people remain obstinate in a lifestyle of sin, there comes a time when it is all right to say, “That’s enough” and associate with them no longer.

“One rotten apple spoils the whole barrel.

When people fall down under the weight of their sin and struggles, we must not kick them when they are down. We help them pick up the pieces and get back on track.

We Christians, of all people, must be known as the people of love and acceptance.

The Victims are not the enemy. Treat them gently. Most really don’t like the ways their lives are going. Hurts are everywhere. Sin is just one expression of the hurt.

Jesus first catches His fish; then He cleans them.
How I treat people in sin. Help them out.

Close with the attitude of Jesus toward the faithful ones in his congregation. Hard message from Jesus.

Mary Ann Bird writes: I grew up knowing I was different, and I hated it. I was born with a cleft palate, and when I started school, my classmates made it clear to me how I looked to others: a little girl with a misshapen lip, crooked nose, lopsided teeth, and garbled speech.

When schoolmates asked, "What happened to your lip?" I'd tell them I'd fallen and cut it on a piece of glass. Somehow it seemed more acceptable to have suffered an accident than to have been born different. I was convinced that no one outside my family could love me.

There was, however, a teacher in the second grade whom we all adored-Mrs. Leonard. She was short, round, happy – a sparkling lady.

Annually we had a hearing test.... Mrs. Leonard gave the test to everyone in the class, and finally it was my turn. I knew from past years that as we stood against the door and covered one ear, the teacher sitting at her desk would whisper something, and we would have to repeat it back – things like "The sky is blue" or "Do you have new shoes?" I waited there for those words that God must have put into her mouth, those seven words that changed my life. Mrs. Leonard said, in her whisper, "I wish you were my little girl."

God says to every person deformed by sin, "I wish you were my son" or "I wish you were my daughter."