

## Revelation 2:18-29

*18“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write:*

*The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this:*

*19‘I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first. 20 ‘But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 21‘I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. 22‘Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. 23‘And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds. 24 ‘But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them—I place no other burden on you. 25‘Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come. 26‘He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, **TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; 27AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES,** as I also have received authority from My Father; 28and I will give him the morning star. 29‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’*

Thyatira was started as a military outpost to protect Pergamum. Eventually it grew to be a town, but never an important one.

Thyatira was known for its dying of cloth. Remember Lydia, a seller of 'purple' who came from Thyatira. Acts 16:14 *One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.*

It's also remembered for its guilds. Thyatira was a union town. They

had guilds for everything. Ancient inscriptions have been found relating to the guild of dyers of cloth in the city.

More guilds are known in Thyatira than any other contemporary city in the Roman province of Asia (inscriptions mention the following: wool-workers, linen-workers, makers of outer garments, dyers, leather-workers, tanners, potters, bakers, slave-dealers, and bronze-smiths

This is the longest of all the letters, and it's to the smallest church of the seven.

As we progress through the different problems of the churches you'll notice a sort of progression. There is a change of tone in this letter. It's like Ephesus and Pergamum weren't that far gone, and the tone is hopeful and encouraging.

That is gone here. Here the tone is frightening! William Eerdsman put it this way.

*"This letter to the church in Thyatira begins the second group of letters to the churches of Asia Minor. In the first group, the church at Ephesus was characterized by a loyalty to Christ which was lacking in love. In the church of Smyrna, loyalty was tested by fire. In the church of Pergamos the loyalty was lacking in moral passion. Yet all three churches were true to the faith and had not yielded to the assaults of evil." In other words, they were still fighting against them. It goes on. "In the case of the church at Thyatira, as of the churches in Sardis and Laodicea, the situation was far more serious. Here not merely a small minority was indifferent but large numbers had actually yielded to the demoralizing influence of false teaching, and I might add of sin*

Vs. 18 *"And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this:*

The ***Son of God!*** No beating around the bush here. No problem identifying who the author might be. The Son of God

*who has eyes like a flame of fire* Do we think the Son of God is not seeing what we are doing. These eyes penetrate the heart and soul. Nothing is hidden from these eyes. They look beyond the surface into the very motives of our hearts.

*and His feet are like burnished bronze* These are the feet of judgement. They will trample all of His enemies.

This introduction doesn't bode well if you are an enemy of Jesus.

Now, the commendation;

*19'I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first.*

This church has much to commend it!

I re-read all of the 'commendations' to the other churches, and I think this one is the most comprehensive. He mentions 5 things. Deeds, Love, Faith, Service, Perseverance, and a 6th deeds lately are even greater than the ones done at first.

Wow! This is an effective church. They're busy! They're loving! They have great faith. They're serving, each other, and the Lord. They're persevering. They haven't grown weary, at all.

IF we stopped right here, THIS is the church we should want to be. I want the Lord Jesus to say that about the church I'm a part of! This is who we want to be, right?

Except one thing; and it wrecks all of the rest. Effectively cancels out all of those good traits and brings the balance sheet into a big negative...

*20'But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.*

*But I have this against you, that you tolerate*

This is the church that tolerates sin.

There's so much here for us to think about. Everything we want to be; Good works. Love, lots of it. Faith to move mountains. Perseverance against all of the problems that try to stop us. Service, to each other, in our community, service, service service, for the glory of Jesus, hard work, day in, day out, for the long haul.

And the fact that we tolerate sin, and let it remain amongst us, cancels out all of the good stuff, and makes us a liability.

Why is this so important. A little sin. Such a little thing. Most of the folks weren't involved. They were looking the other way, they were doing all of those good things in the commendation. Why is this so important. A little bit of sin.

Does a little sin really counterbalance all of the good? Really??

One of my heroes growing up as a christian was L. E. Maxwell. I went to Prairie Bible Institute in 1971, as a new christian, and heard Mr. Maxwell speak. He was old when my parents went to school there in the mid 1950's and he was ancient when I went to hear him speak. What power that old man had!

One of his famous sermons is called "the little things"

The little foxes spoil the vines. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. The tongue is a little member....yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire!

The greek word is mikros. We get micro, tiny, small. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. A micro sin, a tiny little bit of sin, Oh, we'll make up for it with macros huge love. Huge deeds. Huge faith. Huge perseverance. Huge Service. No one will notice our little sin?? Really?

That's what sin does to us. It's like that leaven that spreads and spreads

and spreads until the whole lump of dough is leavened.

It spoils our saltiness. It makes the salt, unsalty. Worthless.

Jesus only says the word "church" four times before His crucifixion. Peter the rock is one. Upon this rock I will build my church....The other three are in the passage in Matthew 18 about purging sin out of the church.

Turn to Matthew 18. This is what spoiled this church. All of their love and good works and faith brought to nothing!

*12 "What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying? 13 "If it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray. 14 "So it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish. 15 "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 "But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that **BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED**. 17 "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.*

Why do you think Jesus talked about the lost sheep immediately before this passage about dealing with sinning members? Notice the ratio. 99 good church members doing good things, one sinning member, wandering, caught in a snag. Mikros. 99:1 but it spoils the church.

Church discipline is NOT about removing sinning members, it's about restoring them. Just like the little lost sheep that the shepherd goes back out into the mountain to find. All tangled up in a tangle. That's what sin does. And the shepherd searches, finds, extricates, and brings safely home the poor sheep.

That's a picture of church discipline. Restoration. First and foremost.

But . . .

What happens when the sheep refuses to be restored. No repentance. No sorrow. Only a stubborn willfulness to continue in the sin. What then?

Take 2 or 3, and confront him. If he still refuses to listen, tell it to the church. The reason for that is so the whole church will go and plead with him to return! Restoration. But if he chooses his sin, over fellowship with the saints, then, you have to do that last thing. Let him be to you as a tax collector and a gentile.

This is a clean removal. This member is removed from the fellowship and joy and love of the Body of Christ.

Paul says in 1 Cor. 5:15 "deliver such an one unto Satan"

That's what we're told to do. The church is the Kingdom of God in the midst of the kingdom of Satan. When we perform church discipline as a last resort, we're taking that sinning member and turning him back out into Satan's world.

Do we do it? Has anyone here ever been in a church where this was taken seriously and lovingly done? Anyone? Or do we let our sheep wander off and get eaten up by the world.

This is a disaster in the modern evangelical movement in America.

We ARE this church. We tolerate sin. We don't deal with sin. And if you're a church that DOES, you make the news. This is so foreign now as to seem bizarre.

Want to get put into the same category as shi-ite extremists?? Deal with sin in the church. You'll make the news. Along with the other wacko's.

In America, where we make a big fuss over separation of powers, church and state, do a google search about excommunicated church members who sued the church. It seems the separation of powers only

works in the government's favor. The church must not disturb the world, but the world can disturb the church.

This is a disaster. Here's a church with a commendation list that we would LOVE to have, and it's neutralized. It's nothing. Forfeit. Game over!

Think that isn't heart breaking for the poor saints who weren't involved and are slugging it out trying to bring glory to Jesus, and He comes and says "Forfeit" And He'll actually deal with that a little bit later in the letter. Individually there are still some winners, but the church is effectively neutralized. It's a big zero.

There is danger here.

I want you to go back and look with me again at Ephesus.

Ephesus is the flip side of this coin.

1 *“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:*

*The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: 2 ‘I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; 3 and you have perseverance and have endured for My name’s sake, and have not grown weary. 4 ‘But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.*

*and that you cannot tolerate evil men*

*and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false;*

This is their commendation. They **DO NOT** tolerate sin. They test the false teachers. Zero tolerance. You sin in Ephesus, or teach rotten stuff, you're outta there. Hit the road Jack. An doncha' come back. No mo.

But somewhere in all this Holy zeal, their love went cold. THAT

neutralized them, just as dead as Thyatira's tolerance of sin neutralized them.

This is a narrow path. This is a difficult path, this thing called 'the church'.

I think it was Alistair Begg who said; *“All Word no Spirit, the church dries up; all Spirit, no Word, the church blows up; Word and Spirit and the church grows up.”*

We could change it slightly for our purposes; All doctrine, no love, the church dries up. All love, no doctrine, the church blows up. Love and doctrine, the church grows up.

I think that's as far as we're going to go tonight. I want that to hover in the air. How difficult it is to get it right. How rare it is to get it right. There are Ephesus churches all over the place!

My mom went to a baptist church near where my sister lives and she said the place was legalistic. She wore pants to church. They were friendly to her, but she could tell, women with pants on was taboo there. Ephesus. No sin there! They were effectively keeping out sin, but love died.

Then there are Thyatira churches all over the place. More common by far than the Ephesus ones. (btw . . . ever been in one of those churches where only the KJV is recognized. Authorized means authorized by God - Ephesus)

America is full of Thyatira type churches. Doing all of the good stuff in the commendation. You walk in and you're just amazed at all the good things going on, but then you discover, they have a low view of God, Sin, the Word of God, it all travels together. Package deal.

Where are the churches that Jesus would write a letter to that haven't gone down one or the other of those roads.

Rare. It's rare to find one.



Lord, help us to be THAT church.