

sermon study summary

October 21 / 22, 2023

Revelation Part 5 – Thyatira, The Church without Convictions

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Jesus' letters to the seven churches address issues we wrestle with in every age. The church at Ephesus had forsaken its first love, the church in Smyrna had remained faithful in the midst of persecution, and the church in Pergamum had compromised. The church in Thyatira had no convictions. It accommodated the culture, tolerated false teachings, and as a result lost its bearings.

We as a church must hold to the fundamental convictions that anchor us. When we compromise our convictions, we have no solid foundation on which to stand, and we start looking like the world. That's what happened in Thyatira.

Thyatira was small and relatively insignificant, a blue-collar town with manufacturing industries. Its people worshiped the god Apollo, supposedly the son of Zeus, and Caesar, who claimed to be the son of God. Jesus introduced Himself as the real Son of God.

Jesus has eyes like blazing fire and feet like burnished bronze. His eyes pierce through the darkness like a laser beam. Nothing escapes His attention. His feet like bronze signify stability. He is unshakable; He can trample every opposition the church faces.

The first part of Jesus' message was positive. "I know your deeds." They were doing great in their works, and getting better at it, but they were weak in the doctrinal matters of the faith.

When the church emphasizes sound faith but ignores service to the community and sacrificial deeds, it ends up with mere head knowledge and dry religion. When the church emphasizes service and good deeds but ignores the core doctrines, it becomes weak and can be easily led astray. Sound faith and good deeds are not opposites. They go hand in hand.

The problem in Thyatira was – they were great in showing love and serving sacrificially but they didn't have sound doctrine. They tolerated false teachers who brought compromise into the church.

Jezebel in the Old Testament used her influence to convince the Israelites that one could worship Baal alongside Yahweh. Similarly, 'Jezebel', a prophetess in the church in Thyatira, built a case for accommodation. Trade guilds in Thyatira offered protection and security but required that their members participate in worship of their gods. Jezebel advocated for compartmentalizing the faith – have one set of values when you are in church, but live by a contradicting set of values when you are with the rest of the world. Jesus is not only upset with Jezebel's reasoning, He is livid that the church would tolerate it!

The accusation of "intolerance" or "being bigoted" often keeps us from speaking the truth. True tolerance is granting people the right to hold different views even if they are wrong. We can respect differing opinions and even strive to understand them, but we cannot give our affirmation to every belief and behavior.

Jesus calls Jezebel and the church to repent, using very strong words. "I will cast her on a bed of suffering... I will strike her children dead.... I will repay each of you according to your deeds" (v.21-23). Jesus will discipline Jezebel and remove her followers from the church. Jesus also gave even Jezebel the opportunity to repent. That is grace at work. No one is too far gone – you can repent and return back to God! When we persist in sin, the most loving thing God can do is discipline us. It's painful, but it's necessary and it brings correction.

The letter to the church in Thyatira ends with two promises for those who persevere till the end: they will reign with Jesus in His future Kingdom, and they will have Jesus, "the morning star," as their ultimate reward.

sermon study guide

IN – PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. Share one revelation, one “aha” moment, you’ve had from the Revelation sermon series.
2. How would your life be different if you did not believe in Jesus?

UP – PURSUE GOD

Revelation 2:18-29.

3. What was the importance, to the Thyatiran Christians, of Jesus using the name Jezebel? Of what is she a symbol? How can we protect against modern day Jezebels both individually and in the church?
4. In verse 19 and given the background of the church of Thyatira, what are the things that are essential to the church? Why is it important to add sound doctrine?

OUT – PURSUE MISSION

5. Apollo, worshipped in Thyatira, was the son of Zeus; the Roman emperor was also called the son of god. Jesus said he is the Son of God (Rev 2:18). What cultural god(s) are luring you away from Jesus? What do you need to do about that?
6. Given society’s definition of tolerance, “You must agree and affirm my view,” what are you willing to lose when modern-day tolerance and Jesus conflict?

For Personal Reflection / Prayer:

As Pastor Ashwin challenged us, “Are we tolerating things in our life that Jesus will not tolerate?” What are those things?

Repent and ask God for forgiveness. Follow through by changing the way we think. Put that change into action. Share with someone who can keep you accountable.

THE WORD

Revelation 2:18-29

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. 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.

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

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, ²⁵ except to hold on to what you have until I come.’

²⁶ To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations— ²⁷ that one ‘will rule them with an iron scepter and will dash them to pieces like pottery’—just as I have received authority from my Father. ²⁸ I will also give that one the morning star. ²⁹ Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Psalm 2:7-9

⁷ I will proclaim the Lord’s decree: He said to me, “You are my son; today I have become your father.

⁸ Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.

⁹ You will break them with a rod of iron[a]; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”

This week’s writers: Elsa Henderson, David McMillin, Mark Eckstein, Gene Gibbs and Jorel Quemuel