

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 3-3-13 PM NOTES
"WHEN BEING TOLERANT IS INTOLERABLE TO CHRIST"
REVELATION 2:18-29
#6 in Series, "Verse-by-Verse Through Revelation"

Revelation 1:19 (NKJV) "Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this."

"Modern man has both feet firmly planted in mid-air."

—Francis Schaeffer

"Our moral senses have been permanently neutered. We have undergone a moral lobotomy."

—Chuck Colson

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (NKJV) "9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God."

Matthew 18:15-17 (NASB) "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 [unbeliever] and a tax collector."

I. The Correspondent (v. 18)

A. He Is the Son of God (v. 18a)

B. He Has Eyes Like a Flame of Fire (v. 18b)

Hebrews 4:13 (NIV) "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."

C. He Has Feet Like Fine Brass (v. 18c)

II. The City (v. 18)

Acts 16:14 (NKJV) "Now a certain woman named Lydia heard *us*. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul."

III. The Commendation (v. 19)

A. Their Love (v. 19a)

B. Their Service (v. 19b)

C. Their Faith (v. 19c)

D. Their Patience (v. 19d)

IV. The Condemnation (vv. 20-23)

Ephesians 4:15 (NASB) “but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ.”

A. The Source of the Heresy (v. 20)

Acts 20:29-30 (NKJV) “²⁹ For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰ Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.”

James 4:4 (ESV) “You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

B. The Stubbornness of the Heresy (v. 21)

2 Peter 3:9 (NKJV) “The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

C. The Suppression of the Heresy (v. 22)

“The mills of God’s justice grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly fine.”

—Unknown

Revelation 2:23 (ESV) “and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve.”

V. The Command (vv. 22b, 24-25)

VI. The Counsel (vv. 26-29)

A. Develop an Eternal Perspective (vv. 26-27)

B. See Jesus as Your Sufficiency (vv. 28-29)

Revelation 22:16 (NKJV) “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.”

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 3-3-13 PM
“WHEN BEING TOLERANT IS INTOLERABLE TO CHRIST”
REVELATION 2:18-29
#6 in Series, “Verse by Verse through Revelation”

Revelation 1:19 (NKJV) “Write the things which you have seen [chapter one], and the things which are [chapters two and three], and the things which will take place after this [chapters four – twenty two].” In chapters 2 and 3 we have looked at three of these seven churches that Jesus dictates a letter to through John. We have studied the letter to the church at Ephesus, the church that left its first love, the church at Smyrna, the persecuted church, and the church at Pergamos, the church that compromised with the world. Today we look at the church at Thyatira, the church that tolerated evil.

When it comes to morals, we as a culture have bought into the lie that right and wrong are relative terms. Each person must determine what is right and wrong for them individually. When it comes to religion, the world says that all religions are true for those who believe them to be true. In this atmosphere where there are supposedly no absolutes (except the absolute that there are no absolutes), the number one virtue is tolerance. In fact, today, intolerance is about the only act that is almost universally considered to be sin. Today’s tolerance no longer means that you show kindness and respect for those who are wrong; today, tolerance means that you can’t tell anyone that they are wrong! To say that any religion is wrong is to commit the unpardonable sin of intolerance. To say that any moral act or lifestyle is wrong is to be arrogant and intolerant. Christian philosopher Francis Schaeffer summarized the modern day mindset when he said, “Modern man has both feet firmly planted in mid-air” Social commentator Chuck Colson said, “Our moral senses have been permanently neutered. We have undergone a moral lobotomy”. In the midst of this “tolerance is the supreme virtue” atmosphere that we live in, we have a Bible that claims to be truth (John 17:17). It claims to be inspired (breathed out) by the God who is revealed in its pages (2 Timothy 3:16). We have a Savior who claims to be the ONLY WAY to the Father and Heaven. This God breathed Word is very blunt about the absoluteness of moral right and wrong. For instance, we read in **1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (NKJV)** “⁹ Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.” That is so intolerant!

Today in this tolerant culture the church has been severely affected. For instance, most churches have ignored a very clear command in the New Testament to practice church discipline. Church discipline is presented in the New Testament as an act of tough love toward a church member who has open public sin in their life that is bringing reproach on Christ and His church that the member is not willing to repent and turn from. The very first instruction Jesus gave for His church dealt with church discipline. He said in **Matthew 18:15-17 (NASB)** 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 [unbeliever] and a tax collector.” We practice that in this church, but with many it is about as popular a case of the flu! The church has all too often bought in to the world’s relativism and reacts negatively to anything that could be deemed “intolerant” by the world.

The church at Thyatira was sternly rebuked by the Lord because they were being tolerant of some things that the Lord saw as intolerable. Sadly, the church at Thyatira was being influenced by the world more

than they were influencing the world around them. Let's learn some things about our church by looking at the church at Thyatira.

I. The Correspondent (V18)

To each church, Jesus, the founder and Lord of the church reveals some things about Himself that are relevant to what is going on in that church. In verse 18, Jesus reveals three things about Himself for this church.

A. He Is the Son of God (V18a)

There are many who deny the deity of Christ who say that Jesus never claimed to be the Son of God. Jesus Christ is speaking in **Revelation 2:18 (NKJV)** and He says "These things say the Son of God..." The one speaking to this church is deity; He is God in the flesh, the very Son of God. In Revelation 1:13 Jesus is called "the Son of Man". In these two titles we see this one who was the Son of God from eternity past taking on human flesh and without ceasing being the Son of God became the Son of man.

B. He Has Eyes like a Flame of Fire (V18b)

Even today when we speak of someone angry, we say, "Their eyes were flashing". The Lord was angry with this church who was tolerating what He saw as intolerable. The eyes of fire also picture His piercing gaze that sees into the secret places of our hearts. **Hebrews 4:13 (NIV)** says that "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account." His eyes of fire see what no one else can see. They see our true motives and our secret thoughts. Everything in the individual and in a church is laid open before the piercing eyes of the Savior which are like a flame of fire.

C. He Has Feet like Fine Brass (V18c)

Brass or bronze is a symbol of judgment. Jesus identifies Himself as the one who is coming to this tolerant church to bring judgment, to trample out impurity. When any church – this church – begins tolerating that which Christ deems intolerable, they will experience the judgment of the Son of God. It is a fearful thing in any church when the good Shepherd becomes the judge of His disobedient church.

II. The City (V18)

Thyatira is the modern day city of Akhisar in Turkey. It was located about 30-35 miles east of Pergamum. It is interesting that Jesus wrote the longest letter to the smallest church. When we look at some things going on in the city of Thyatira, we get some insight into what was happening in the church that brought Jesus' promise of judgment. Thyatira was a "blue collar" working town known for its various trade guilds which were very similar to modern day unions. There were trade guilds for carpenters, dyers of cloth, merchants, and several other vocations. We meet a woman in the book of Acts who was a seller of purple fabric who came from this town. **Acts 16:14 (NKJV)** "Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul." If you were not a member of a labor guild, it was very difficult to make a living in Thyatira. We know from extra-biblical sources that each labor guild had its own pagan deity (sort of like a patron saint or athletic team mascot, except they were pagan gods). The guild members were expected to attend the guild festivals which involved a feast eating meat that had been offered to these idols and participating in worship of the idol. Often the pagan worship of these idols involved vile sexual orgies. To fail to participate in these festivals and to worship the patron deity could cause a person to be put out of the guild and thus find it very difficult to earn a living. We will refer back to this historical situation later in the message.

III. The Commendation (V19)

This church was not an apostate, spiritually dead church. While they had some very serious problems, there was a faithful minority in the church that were doing things right.

A. Their Love (V19a)

This is the only one of the seven churches that is singled out for their love. While love was left behind at Ephesus, this minority in the church at Thyatira was commended for their love. I believe that we can assume that it was a very fragile and immature love because it did not have a strong doctrinal foundation. Nevertheless, this church did have a faithful minority who had a love for God and one another.

B. Their Service (V19b)

Genuine love always leads to service. The word translated “service” is the Greek word that we get “deacon” from. They were serving one another by doing deacon acts – acts of service. A church that truly loves God will love others and a church that loves others will be known for their acts of serving others.

C. Their Faith (V19c)

The word faith as it is used here could better be translated “faithfulness”. This minority of the church at Thyatira were dependable and consistent.

D. Their Patience (V19d)

This word can be translated perseverance. Faithfulness produces perseverance. Perseverance is endurance that bears up even under stress and growing pressures.

Not only was this faithful minority commended for their love, service, faith, and patience; all of these virtues were growing in them. They were loving more, persevering more, and serving more. They were growing in their works and had refused to become stagnant. No church can afford to be satisfied with their level of love, service, faithfulness and endurance; there must be a concerted effort to grow in these areas. For their love, service, faith, and patience, our Lord commends them.

IV. The Condemnation (V20-23)

For the church as a whole and by implication the leaders of the church, the Lord Jesus had a strong and scathing rebuke. Even their positives could not blunt the sharp word of judgment that the Lord Jesus had for this church as a whole. What we are going to see is that this church had a weakness in the area of doctrine. They were tolerating false doctrine that was leading many of the members into idolatry and immorality. Before we look at the specifics of the Lord’s rebuke, let me share some very important general principles. It is interesting to contrast this church at Thyatira and the church at Ephesus. The church at Ephesus had sound doctrine but they had a love that had grown cold. The church at Thyatira had love but no sound doctrine. Every church will tend toward one of these extremes and we must battle constantly to keep a biblical balance between the two. Unloving orthodoxy and loving compromise are both repugnant to the Lord of the church. Love and doctrine are like the two chemical ingredients of salt. Salt is actually composed of two poisons – sodium and chloride. If we ingested one without the other we would become sick and if we ingested enough, we would die. However, if we properly combine them, we have sodium chloride, which is common table salt that adds flavor to bland food. In a church, the proper mixture of love and doctrine reflects a healthy church and gives a good testimony to the world and receives approval from God. We see that balance in **Ephesians 4:15 (NASB)** “but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ”.

Here is the truth we will see from what Jesus Christ wrote to the church at Thyatira: no amount of loving and sacrificial works can compensate for tolerating the evil that Christ finds intolerable. Let’s look more in-depth at the evil in this church at Thyatira.

A. The Source of the Heresy (V20)

The problem at Thyatira was not external persecution; it was internal compromise and error that was being tolerated. The Apostle Paul warned that the greatest danger facing a church is false teaching from

within. He said in **Acts 20:29-30 (NKJV)** “²⁹ For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰ Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” The strongest language in the Bible is reserved for those who depart from the truth and then seek to lead those in the church to follow them in their error. The source of the error at Thyatira was a woman named Jezebel. While it is possible that Jezebel was really this woman’s name, it is highly unlikely. The point is that she was a “Jezebel-like woman”. The woman who was the source of this heresy in the church at Thyatira was like the Jezebel in the Old Testament. In order to understand what this woman was doing, we need to go back to the Old Testament Jezebel and see her sin. Jezebel was the daughter of the King of Sidon – a people known for their Baal worship. Baal was a pagan fertility god, and the worship of Baal involved “worshippers” committing the grossest sexual immoralities imaginable. The temples of Baal were filled with prostitutes – both male and female who enabled the worshippers to participate in unspeakable practices. Jezebel married Ahab, the King of Israel’s Northern Kingdom. When Jezebel moved into the King of Israel’s palace, she brought Baal worship with her. She financially supported 850 prophets of Baal. Ahab was a weak man and Jezebel controlled him like a puppet on a string. There was a woman in the church at Thyatira like Jezebel. Perhaps she was one of the Elder’s wives, or the wife of another leader in the church.

Remember what we learned about the unions (labor guilds) in Thyatira? This was probably the avenue through which this Jezebel led the people into immorality and the worship of false gods. This Jezebel claimed to be a prophetess (one who spoke forth God’s Word). It is likely that she was encouraging the members of the church to participate in the festivals associated with the labor guilds (unions). Perhaps her line of reasoning was, “You must participate in the eating of the meat offered to idols and take part in the immorality in order to keep your job. God expects you to take care of your family. Business is business. After all, an idol is nothing and God understands. We are under grace! This might even give you an opportunity to witness and invite others to church. This is a great bridge to those in the world.” We don’t know if the immorality was literal or symbolic of being friends with the world. James used it in this symbolic way in **James 4:4 (ESV)** “You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

Likely tied in to her claim to be a prophetess was her claim to have revelation directly from the Lord Jesus Himself. Jesus says in verse 24 that instead of teaching deep revelation from God she was teaching from the depths of Satan. Almost every cult started when a person claiming to be a prophet began to share “deep things” that God had revealed to them that contradicted the plain teaching of Scripture. In short, this Jezebel condoned what God condemned. Learn this: you don’t have to keep your job! You don’t have to survive. The compromising of God’s moral commands is not better than poverty or even physical death.

B. The Stubbornness of This Heresy (V21)

We are told often of the Lord’s patience and longsuffering because of His great mercy and compassion. Even this first century Jezebel was given opportunity to repent, but she refused. Because God doesn’t immediately strike a false prophet down doesn’t mean that He approves of their message. **2 Peter 3:9 (NKJV)** “The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” The opportunity to repent is a gift from God.

C. The Suppression of This Heresy (V22-23)

There is an end to God’s longsuffering. Judgment will come. I think it was one of the Puritans who said, “The mills of God’s justice grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly fine”. The judgment of God was

coming upon Jezebel and those who had followed her false teaching. Just as the Old Testament Jezebel met a horrible end, even so this first century Jezebel and her followers would meet an awful end. I see no reason not to take this judgment of God literally. Her children are not referring to biological children but those who have followed and propagated her teaching. There would be suffering and even physical death. In the New Testament, salvation is always according to faith, but judgment is always according to works (Romans 2:1-16). Notice that God's judgment is both disciplinary and exemplary. **Revelation 2:23 (ESV)** "and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works."

V. The Command (V22b, 24-25)

The Lord's command to those who had been seduced is "repent!" Have you ever noticed that this is God's command for every sin? To those who had not listened to and followed this Jezebel, the Lord says, in **Revelation 2:25 (NKJV)** "But hold fast what you have till I come." The Greek word translated "hold fast" is a strong word and indicates that holding fast would not be easy. He is saying, "Get a bulldog grip on the truth and hold fast to it whatever you have to go through. How do they do that? Look at the last point.

VI. The Counsel (V26-29)

Here is how we hold fast.

A. Develop an Eternal Perspective (V26-27)

He has already encouraged them in verse 25 to look to His coming. The second coming of Christ is most precious to those who suffer the most here. Now in verses 26-27 Jesus pulls from Psalms 2. This Psalm takes us into the future after Christ returns and sets up His millennial kingdom and we will rule with Him. The Lords rule then will be absolute and sin will be dealt with immediately. There will be no Jezebels to contend with!

B. See Jesus as Your Sufficiency (V28-29)

What is the morning star? Let's let the book of Revelation tell us! **Revelation 22:16 (NKJV)** "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star." To the true believers, Jesus has given Himself. Don't miss this glorious truth! In times of trial, temptation, need, loneliness, fear, or perplexity, whatever you truly need, He is!

- Do you need answers? He is the truth (John 14:6)
- Are you hungry for meaning in this crazy world? He is the bread of life to satisfy that hunger (John 6:35)
- Are you thirsty for more of God and God's power? He is the Living water (John 4:14).
- Are you lonely? He is the friend that sticks closer than a brother (Proverbs 18:24)
- Do you need strength to get through a trial? He is the vine; abide in Him (John 15)
- Do you need forgiveness? He is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29)
- Do you need wisdom? He is our wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:30)
- Do you need guidance? He is the way (John 14:6)
- Do you need right standing with God? He is our righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21)

We could go on and on. What you truly need, He is! He is sufficient. And in this world of trials and temptations to compromise to get by, He says I am the morning star. No matter how black your night may be, I am sufficient for you.