

Thyatira: Corrupted by Compromise

Revelation 2: 18-29

Our text deals with the fourth church that Christ addressed in Revelation. While the church in Thyatira was situated within the smallest of the cities the Lord would address, it is interesting that they received the largest letter. The name means “*unceasing sacrifice*.” It was a military buffer city located 40 miles southeast of Pergamos. When Asia Minor was invaded, Thyatira was usually the first to be attacked. Their primary concern was to hold the enemy until Pergamos had time to prepare for battle. They were constantly sacrificing for Pergamos.

Because of the great business location, the trade guilds flourished there. The city was especially well known for its purple dye (Acts 16:14 refers to Lydia, a seller of purple cloth from Thyatira). The guilds served as the social and economic center of the city and also exercised a powerful religious influence. The guild feasts were often religious in nature, as the guilds worshiped their patron god(s). If Christians joined a guild, they would have been pressured to participate in the idolatrous feasts; if they refused to join, they would have suffered socially and financially. Emperor worship was not as prominent as in Pergamum, but the city offered other opportunities to worship pagan gods, especially Apollo, the sun god and son of Zeus. Syncretism (combining different beliefs and forms of religion) was the order of the day in Thyatira.¹

Jesus commended the church for its love for God, faithfulness in serving others, and for persevering in the faith, but He warned of judgment to come for compromise among the pagans, while agreeing with their false doctrine, which led to immorality and idolatry. Considering Thyatira, we will discover they were very active, but they were filled with apostasy. Jesus reminds them of His position and power in **V.18 – And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass.** As we examine the **certainties** within the text, I want to consider: **Thyatira – Corrupted by Compromise.**

I. Jesus Confirmed their Service (19) – I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Our Lord always began with recognition of what the church was doing right. Thyatira was no different.

A. He Confirmed their Actions – Jesus knew their works and their service. They were busy doing good deeds to benefit those around them. The word **service** means “*ministry*.” This is the word “*diakonia*”, often translated deacon within the New Testament. It has the idea of “*stirring up dust*.” They were so busy that they stirred a cloud of dust as they worked.

B. He Confirmed their Attitude – Jesus also spoke of their charity, faith, and patience. Their love was agape love, God’s unconditional love. It knew no boundaries, not influenced by outside circumstances. They were also faithful; you could count on them to finish the task. They had an attitude of patience. They stood under the load they bore, committed to their work.

C. He Confirmed their Attendance (19b) – *and the last to be more than the first.* Jesus honored their commitment. Instead of slacking off or giving up, they were moving forward with the ministry. The works they were doing were greater than their works at the first. We need to continue to move forward as they did. We ought to be doing more now than we did when we were first saved. They were a people of good works, but spiritually they were lacking.

II. Jesus Chastised Their Sin (20-23) – Outwardly they looked like a solid church, but inwardly they were filled with corruption. Notice:

A. He Revealed a Warning (20) – *Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.* There was a particular problem at the center of their corruption. The word suffer means “*to tolerate, permit, or allow.*” Thyatira had begun tolerating false doctrine and allowing these heretics to defile their walk with God. This likely didn’t happen overnight, but through an attitude of compromise. This compromise affected:

1. Their Doctrine (20) – They had allowed a prophetess, referred to as Jezebel, to teach and seduce them. She carries the same name as one of the wickedest women in the Bible. Jezebel was married to King Ahab and was a key player in defiling Israel in Elijah’s day. She influenced the people to worship Baal and deny the true and living God. This Jezebel was just like her. She had defiled the church by influencing them to commit immorality and idolatry, (illus. their pagan feasts). She must have taught that they could engage in wickedness and sin, and still be right with God. The people were being led away from God.

- Sound doctrine must be taught and preached within the church. We must be careful to whom we listen, abiding in the Word, and never compromising the truth.

2. Their Disobedience (21) – *And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.* Aren’t you glad we serve a merciful, long-suffering God? Even in their wickedness, Jesus gave them plenty of time to repent, but they would not. The Lord is patient, but His patience doesn’t last

forever. When people continue in sin, rejecting the conviction of God, judgment will come. It is dangerous to shun the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

3. Their Discipline (22-23a) – Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts. Jesus will judge sin. He is holy and cannot condone sin. He gives a solemn warning to the wicked about coming judgment. He will cast the seductive harlot into a bed of great tribulation, along with those who have defiled themselves with her. It's not clear if this was physical or spiritual fornication, likely both; either way God is displeased. (We are the bride of Christ. When we defile ourselves with wickedness, we have committed spiritual fornication against our Lord.)

- Jesus also said He would kill her children. He will remove those who have been born of this unholy union. I believe this refers to all those who follow her false doctrine, the children of deception. Jesus will purify His church. [Heb.10:31](#) – It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

B. He Revealed a Witness (23b) – And I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

Many in Thyatira thought they were getting by, that they could do as they pleased and no one would know. Jesus knows our hearts; He knows our thoughts; He knows our deeds as well. He is well aware of everything about us. We may hide sin from others, but we can't hide it from God. He will not allow us to become a reproach on His name.

- Wouldn't it be tragic for the Lord to find it necessary to make an example of us? I would never want to be part of a local congregation that represents what happens when a church loses the power and presence of God in judgment.

III. Jesus Consoled the Saints (24-29) – Even though Thyatira was given over to much wickedness, not all had followed Jezebel. There was a faithful remnant left there. Jesus gives words of comfort concerning:

A. Their Faithfulness (24) – But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. Jesus reminded them to stand on what they knew was true, holding fast to sound doctrine. It would've been difficult to stand when so many had forsaken the Lord. Jesus encouraged them to stay true and be faithful till the end.

- We must do the same. This is God's will for our lives as well. Even if everyone around us forsakes the truth, we must remain steadfast! God's truth is the foundation for our lives. If we forsake truth, what is left?

B. Their Future (25-29) – ^[25] **But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.** Jesus also reminded them that this world was not all there is for the child of God. It may get dark here, but there is a brighter day ahead. Notice their future involved:

1. His Power (26-27) – **And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:** ^[27] **And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.** Jesus is referring to the day when he comes in power and sets up His kingdom here on earth to rule and reign for 1,000 years. To those who overcome, there is the promise of reigning with Jesus.

- We may be hated, persecuted, and mocked, but one glorious day we shall enjoy all that Christ has to offer. Right now, our world is dominated by sin and wickedness, but Jesus will set things right when He comes.

2. His Person (28-29) – **And I will give him the morning star.** ^[29] **He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.** He also promised them the morning star. They had endured much darkness, but there is the promise of the coming of the Bright and Morning Star. He will come in all His power and glory. Their darkness wouldn't last forever – morning would come!

- We share that hope in Christ. Our world grows darker each day, but hold on Christian, for morning is soon coming. We will one day hear the trumpet sound as the redeemed are called out to meet the Lord in the air, and spend that glorious, eternal day in heaven.

Conclusion: I pray we never become a Thyatira. We must realize that serving God isn't just about good works. It also involves sound doctrine and pure lives. You and I are the ones who must make the choice. Will we continue to live for Jesus or compromise with the world? Thyatira became defiled because of sin. Where do you stand with the Lord? If God has spoken to you, why not come, confess your sin, and enjoy sweet fellowship with the Lord?

ⁱ Duvall, J. S. (2014). [Revelation](#). (M. L. Strauss & J. H. Walton, Eds.) (p. 58). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.