

The Defiled Church (Message #8)

Revelation 2: 18-29

Tonight we are dealing with the church in Thyatira, the 4th church addressed in Revelation. Prophetically, it represents the church age from 590-1517 AD, the period known as the dark ages. These times were very dark. The common people were prevented access to materials of learning, especially the Bible. The Catholic Church believed that only the priests needed to have access to the Word of God.

Thyatira was the smallest of the 7 cities that were written to of Christ. Little is known about Thyatira, but it is here that Jesus sent His longest letter. **Thyatira** means “**unceasing sacrifice**.” It was a military buffer city located 40 miles SE of Pergamos. When Asia Minor was invaded, Thyatira was usually attacked 1st. Their primary concern was to hold the enemy until Pergamos had time to prepare for battle. They were constantly sacrificing for Pergamos.

An expensive purple dye, used of royalty, was produced there. There were also men of trade in Thyatira. Like the others, they were involved in pagan worship. As we look at them, we will find 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**. He knew what they were. I don't think we are like Thyatira, but we must guard against becoming like them. Tonight let's take a moment to look at: **The Defiled Church**.

I. Jesus Confirms 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 begins with recognition of what the church is doing right. Thyatira is no different.

A. He Confirms 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**”, translated **deacon** throughout the NT. It has the idea of “**stirring up dust**.” They were so busy that they stirred a cloud of dust as they worked.

B. He Confirms 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 Confirms Their Attendance – Jesus honors them in [V.19b](#) – **and the last to be more than the first**. Instead of slacking off or giving up, they were moving forward with the ministry. The works they are doing now are greater than they did at 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.

I. Jesus Confirms Their Service (19)

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

A. He Reveals a Warning (20a) – **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 **sufferest** 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.

- Church, we need to take a stand on the Word of God. If people or programs don’t line up with the Bible, we don’t need them! “Well I don’t want to hurt anyone’s feelings. Everyone else thinks it’s OK.” Listen, I don’t like to hurt people either, but I’m more concerned with the well being of our church and people’s eternity than I am their feelings! Their compromise brought tragic results; it always does. Jesus warned of a threefold problem.

1. Their Doctrine (20b) – **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**. They had allowed a prophetess by the name of Jezebel to teach and seduce them. She carries the same name as one of the wickedest women in the Bible. She 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 is just like her. She has defiled the church by influencing them to commit immorality and idolatry, (illus. their pagan feasts). She must've been teaching that they could participate in this wickedness and still be right with God. The people were being led away from God.

- We need sound doctrine taught and preached in the church. I'm convinced that everybody who has Rev. before their name, carrying a Bible, is not a man of God. We must be careful about whom we listen to and about 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.

- I firmly believe many have filled an early grave because of disobedience. This is especially true of Christians. We know better; we have the witness of the Spirit dwelling within our hearts!

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 says He will 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 Reveals 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 heart: 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.
- Jesus tells them that all churches shall know who He is. I don't want Jesus to make an example out of us. I don't want us to represent what happens when a church loses the power and presence of God in judgment.

I. Jesus Confirms Their Service (19)

II. Jesus Chastises Their Sin (20-23)

III. Jesus Consoles 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 reminds them to stand on what they know is true, hold 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) – **But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.** Jesus also reminded them that this world is not all there is for the child of God. It may get dark down here, but there is a brighter day ahead. Notice their future involves:

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: 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. 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 is coming!

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

I pray that 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 tonight? If God has spoken to you, why not come, confess your sin, and enjoy that sweet fellowship with the Lord?