**Revelation**

*Lesson 9 – Revelation 2:18-29*

1. The addresses to the 7 churches all follow the same basic pattern:
   1. Address – “to the angel of the church….write”
   2. Christ’s Self-designation – “the words of…..”
   3. Christ’s Commendation – “I know….” something positive about the church
   4. Christ’s Condemnation – “But I have this…..against you…..” something negative about the church
   5. Christ’s Promise or Threat – “I will….” or “remember….or else”
   6. Christ’s Exhortation – “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”
   7. Christ’s Promise – “to the one who conquers…..” something good Christ promises

**The Church in Thyatira (2:18-29)**

1. Located thirty-five miles southeast of Pergamum, Thyatira was a minor city known principally for its textile industry. While at Philippi, Paul met Lydia, a dealer in purple fabrics, from Thyatira. Several inscriptions mention trade guilds at Thyatira (bakers, potters, tanners, and coppersmiths). The textile industry, composed of wool merchants, dyers, and linen workers, received prominent attention. Dyers used a purple dye obtained from the murex shell, which was much prized by the wealthy. Purple cloth exported from Thyatira boosted the economy greatly. Each trade guild has its own guardian god so here’s the way things worked in Thyatira. If you wanted to get ahead in life, you had to belong to a guild. Your membership to a guild implies that you worship its god. When the guilds gathered at their festivals, the food was offered to the guardian deity and you were to receive the food as if it came from that particular god. After the festival, the really immoral things started to happen that will not be mentioned and if you walk out, you will be mocked and ridiculed.
2. So it was a difficult situation for a Christian. If he quit the union, he lost his position and standing in society which would lead to hunger, poverty, and persecution. On the other hand, if he remained and attended these pagan festivals and ate food sacrificed to idols and other immoral acts, then he would be denying the Lord Jesus.
3. This is the longest of the 7 letters to the churches although arguably Thyatira was the least significant of the cities that are addressed.

*Address (v 18a)*

1. I’ve already discussed the possible options about this being a real guardian angel over the church or the minister of the church. Regardless, Jesus is still in the midst of the lampstands and He is still tending to His Church.

*Christ’s Self-designation (v18b)*

1. Christ describes Himself as having fiery eyes and feet like bronze.
2. The designation of fiery eyes indicates that Christ is the one who sees all even the depths of our mind and heart.
3. “The Lord Jesus has eyes that can burn through every conceivable façade and defense that we can devise to hide our true selves from others, eyes that penetrate right into our hearts. When his eyes are upon you, He sees right through you. He knows all things; nothing in my life is shielded from His gaze, even those things that I hide from myself. Nothing is hidden from Him.” –Joel Beeke
4. The feet of burnished bronze (see Rev 1:15) indicates that Christ is ready to trample upon the wicked, even the wicked within His Church.
5. Christ also designates Himself as “the Son of God.” Up until now He has been the “Son of Man” so this is significant.
6. “One reason is that He wants to remind the Thyatirans that they have to deal with the living God. They are not just playing church or building a spiritual empire for themselves. The scandal He is about to expose in the church touches His name and His honor. We need to remind ourselves, as we come to God’s house each week and when we celebrate the Lord’s Supper, that how we conduct ourselves has everything to do with the Son of God and His reputation.” –Joel Beeke

*Christ’s Commendation (vv19)*

1. Thyatira was like the opposite of the church at Ephesus with a little bit of Smyrna and Pergamum thrown in. Ephesus was high on doctrine and low on love. Thyatira was high on love and low on doctrine. Smyrna had patient endurance and works. Thyatira had patient endurance and works. Pergamum tolerated false teaching. Thyatira tolerated false teaching.
2. When the words “endurance” and “faith” occur together elsewhere in Revelation they refer to a persevering witness.
3. Unlike Ephesus whose first works were greater than their latter works, Thyatira’s latter works exceed their first. They have greater zeal to proclaim Christ in faithful witness to a pagan world. They have grown in faith and service.

*Christ’s Condemnation (vv20-21)*

1. Notice that Christ’s commendation as good as it is, is only 1 verse, whereas His condemnation and the associated threat is 4 verses. Christ spends more time on what is wrong with the Church than He does with what is right, although He begins with the positive first.
2. Christ uses a symbolic name, Jezebel, to describe a female false teacher in the church who is leading the sheep astray.
3. Jezebel appears in 1 Kings 16:31; 19:1-2; 21:5-26; and 2 Kings 9:30-37. She was married to King Ahab, was the one who had Naboth put to death, and caused Israel to worship the false god, Baal.
4. So this woman in the spirit of Jezebel is teaching the church to eat foods sacrificed to idols and to practice sexual immorality. She’s preaching compromise with the world so you don’t have to lose your job or standing in society and the church is tolerating this.
5. This is identical to the false teaching of Balaam that the church in Pergamum was tolerating.
6. The implication of verse 20 is that the church should have immediately exercised church discipline upon this false prophetess, but instead they listened to her and allowed her to remain in the church. They tolerated her.
7. You can feel the anger of the verse when Christ says “SHE is seducing MY servants.”
8. In verse 21, Christ says he gave this wolf in sheep’s clothing time to repent but she refuses. God extended grace and mercy to her but she rejected and resisted it.

*Christ’s Threat/Promise (v22-25)*

1. Christ’s threat consists of a number of things:
   1. Jezebel will be thrown onto a sickbed
   2. Those who follow her way will be thrown into great tribulation unless they repent
   3. Jezebel’s children will be struck dead
2. These things, according to verse 23, will indicate to all of Christ’s Church everywhere that Christ is the one who knows all and sees all, even the secret things and Christ will give recompense to the works of those within the church.
3. Christ, however, also has a positive word for those in the church of Thyatira who have not followed Jezebel. Christ doesn’t have any burden to lay upon you. In other words, in reacting to the lack of holiness, in the church, don’t veer off into legalism by creating man-made rules and legislation. Just continue to hold fast to what you have been holding onto until He returns. In other words, you have been faithful in holding fast to what is true and rejecting error. Continue to be faithful.
4. Verse 24 - “the deep things of Satan.” This is part of the teaching of Jezebel and William Hendricksen describes it like this: “[Jezebel argues] In order to conquer Satan, you must know him. You will never be able to conquer sin unless you have become thoroughly acquainted with it by experience. In brief, a Christian should learn to know ‘the deep things of Satan.’ By all means attend the guild-feasts and commit fornication…and still remain a Christian; nay rather, become a better Christian [through sinning].”
5. Joel Beeke describes it like this, “Unlike Daniel in Babylon, you need not stand apart or alone; you may live as the Babylonians and still keep your Christianity.” You can be in the world and of the world. You are freed from the law and can live however you like and continue willingly to sin as a Christian.

*Christ’s Promise (v26-28)*

1. Those who are faithful to the end Christ will give
   1. Authority over the nations to rule with an iron fist that will break the nations
   2. The morning star

*Christ’s Exhortation (v29)*

1. Again this message goes beyond Thyatira to all churches, even today. But only the Spirit can give us the ears to hear what the Spirit is saying.

**Message for Us**

1. Joel Beeke calls the church at Thyatira “an overly tolerant church.” He writes, “Tolerance is a burning issue in our day. We live in a tolerant age that calls for ever-increasing tolerance—in theology, in religion, in relationships, in sexuality, yes, in nearly every area of life. And yet, those who call the loudest for tolerance of their views and lifestyles are often the most intolerant of those who don’t tolerate sin.” So one message for us is what do you tolerate? What sin are you willing to justify and be okay with in compromise with the world? What sins are we as a church willing to tolerate and compromise the faith? Tolerance is not a virtue as the world tries to make us think these days.
2. Of the church in Thyatira, Joel Beeke says, “In Thyatira, proper instruction in ‘head knowledge’ was being neglected for the belief that experience and love were all that counted.” We need to have a balance of both. Christ commends both sound doctrine and Christian love and Christian service. He condemns churches when they lose this balance in one direction or the other. We have to fight and strive to be as balanced as the Bible calls us to be. Satan either wants us to be so intellectual that we lose Christian heart and warmth or Satan wants us to be so focused on spiritual experience that we lose sound doctrine.
3. Christ wants His church to be holy and pure and that is why each of us as individuals need to both pursue holiness ourselves and also encourage others in their pursuit of holiness.
4. The big word for living like a pagan Christian is “antinomianism” which means “no law.” In other words, this heresy teaches you can live however you like without consequences because you are saved. But that false teaching goes against Scripture.