THE DANGER OF TOLERANCE

 **DATE: 6/10/2018 am**

**TEXT: Revelation 2:18-29**

**INTRODUCTION**

We are continuing to look at the Dangers that Face our Church

In the Book of Revelation, Chapters 1-3 we find the LORD telling the Apostle John to write letters to the churches in Asia Minor

These letters are addressed to the Pastors of those churches and have a message for the whole church

So far, we have looked at the Letters to the Churches in Ephesus, Smyrna and Pergamos

In Ephesus the Main Message was that they had left their First Love

In Smyrna it was that Suffering was coming, and they were not to be Afraid

In Pergamos it was the Danger of Compromise

This morning we will be looking at the 4th Letter written to the Church in Thyatira, and its Message to us

Each letter follows a reoccurring pattern

In each, Jesus provides …

-- A poetic description of Himself

-- A compliment for the church

-- A correction with an admonition to repent

(There are 2 churches that He doesn’t correct)

-- Then in every letter He makes a promise ***“to him that overcometh”***

A promise that applies even to us

-- He then gives us some insight into some of the Rewards of Heaven

As we come to the Church at Thyatira, let’s look into its background before we start the Message

Thyatira was the smallest of the seven cities mentioned in the letters to the churches and the least known

Yet it was the Longest of the Letters

Thyatira was founded by Alexander the Great and its name means “*Unceasing Sacrifice*”

Militarilyit was an out post and destroyed and rebuilt several times

It was thriving commercially

It was Lydia, that was saved first in Philippi who came from Thyatira

**Acts 16:14 - “*a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira…***”

Thyatira was also known for its Trade Guilds or Unions

You had to be a member or you didn’t work

Thyatira was also a center of occult worship

Serious problems had crept into the church at Thyatira

**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 comes as – ***“The Son of God”*** – As Saviour

-- He comes with – ***“eyes like unto a flame of fire”***

He comes as the One Who sees all (and)

-- He comes with - ***“feet like fine brass”***

Brass in the Bible is symbolic of Judgment

Let’s pray and Look at what Dangers they Faced

**~~~Prayer~~~**

**I. JESUS “COMMENDS THEIR SERVICE” - v. 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”***

Jesus is following the same pattern that He as followed with the previous churches

First, He Commends, then He Confronts

**A. He Commends their ‘Ministry’**

Ministry describes *good deeds and benevolent outreach*

This was an active church

They were working within their congregation and within the community around them

Their Ministry is noted by the words Jesus uses

***“I know thy works, … and service”***

They were Busy and Burdened

They were busy about the Lord’s business

**B. He Commends their ‘Motives’**

What was behind these Works and Service?

What Motivated them to do the things they were doing?

**1.** ***“charity”*** – Love

**I John 3:18** – ***“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth”***

Our love for others has to begin with our Love for the Lord

If you try to just Love people without a genuine Love for the Lord

You won’t be able to do it!

That was Paul’s motive **- II Corinthians 5:14** – ***“For the love of Christ constraineth us;”*** (Compelled)

**2.** ***“Faith”***

This word refers to *faithfulness*

These were folks that could be counted on to get the job done

They were not fickle

Too many times there is work to be done around the church but no one wants to do it

People want to have a church, but don’t want to do what is necessary to have one

Or when they do it, they do it reluctantly

Is that you?

You know what? If we are going to grow up, we need to get past some things

**C. He Commends their ‘Maturity’**

***“I know thy …Works; and the last to be more than the first”***

When I use the term “maturity”, I’m not talking about spiritual growth

I’m talking about taking on more Ministry

Their outreach and ministry was beginning to increase

What Jesus says about the church of Thyatira should be true of our church as well

We should be a church that is busy for the glory of God

Not just having activities for the sake of Fellowship

A preacher said once – “*We (can) Bowl for Blessings on Monday, Jog for Jesus on Tuesday, Eat in the kitchenette and endure a sermonette on Wednesday. Have Home runs for Heaven on Thursday, Golf for Glory on Friday, and spread the table to stay able on Saturday*” …

But if it’s all done just to socialize, we missed the point

We should be active in the Lord’s work

We should see that everything we do is motivated by one of three things …

-- Exalting the Saviour

-- Evangelizing the Sinner

-- Edifying the Saints

Those three things comprise the whole of our business and we should be actively engaged in them for the glory of God

**JESUS “COMMENDS THEIR SERVICE”**

**II. JESUS “CONFRONTS THEIR SIN” – vs. 20-23**

Everyone loves to hear the good things about themselves

But when it comes to Correction, most people push back

Matter-of-fact that has been a trait of man-kind for a long time

While this church appeared to be everything a church ought to be on the surface, at its heart there was a festering sore

 The church at Thyatira looked good on the outside, but it was corrupt at its core

Jesus Confronts their sin … He says …

***“Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee,”***

**A. He Confronts the ‘Teacher’**

The church in Thyatira was being led away from the Lord by the teachings of an influential woman in their congregation

This woman is called Jezebel

This could have been her real name,

But I think the Lord was just referencing that name to paint a picture

He wanted them to know that she wasn’t right

Jezebel in the OT was the wife of wicked king Ahab

**I Kings 16:31**

She was the wicked daughter of a Gentile king

She was a devoted worshiper of the False god Baal

Baal was a fertility god and his prophets and priests were no more than temple whoremongers

 Baal was worshiped through vile acts and gross wickedness

When Jezebel came to Israel, she brought her perverted religion with her

The name Jezebel came to be identified with vile wickedness and idol worship

**1.** Her *Sin is Described***– v. 20**

As ***“teach(ing) and seduce(ing) God’s servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols”***

This self-appointed prophetess (whoever she was) was guilty of leading the people away from the true worship of God

No one is quite sure what was actually going on

Remember earlier that I mentioned the Trade Guild or Unions in the introduction?

That you had to be a member of one in Thyatira or you didn’t work

Well, these guilds would often have meetings in the pagan temples around town

Such meetings were often immoral affairs involving drunkenness, drug abuse and immorality

(Kind-of like the Office Christmas parties today)

These meetings would also involve a meal and would either begin or end with a sacrifice to a pagan god

When the pagans in Thyatira were saved, they were faced with a decision

Did they refuse to join the guilds and be unemployed; or did they participate in the pagan rituals and compromise their testimonies?

The Word of God gives us the answer …

**Acts 15:29 - *“That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well”***

The new converts were commanded to abstain from everything that was going on at these meetings

But this Jezebel was teaching something that was contrary to Scripture

It may have been the idea that an individual could …

… be saved by grace and still indulge the flesh

This woman preacher may have been telling the people in this church that they could hold onto their pagan practices and still serve the Lord;

That they could sin and still be saved; that one thing had nothing to do with the other

This may have been the tool that church was using to get the pagans of Thyatira to come to their church

They were Tolerant of the open sin that was being committed and not addressing it

She was teaching that it was alright to live any way you like and still call yourself a Christian

(Boy – if that ain’t going on today!)

**2.** Her *Stubbornness is Denounced* **– v. 21**

***“And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not”***

The Lord had given this woman and her followers time to turn from their sins, but it seems that they refused to do so

Now, God’s patience has run out and she is slated for judgment

I’m thankful that the Lord is Longsuffering and Patience …

But at some point, it ends

**Proverbs 29:1 – *“He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy”***

I believe that people can sin away their days of Grace

**3.** Her *Sentence is Declared* **– vs. 22,23**

***“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: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works”***

Because of what she has done, she and all her followers will face God’s Judgement

By using the phrase ***“cast…her into great tribulation”***

He is telling us that these people are not saved

But, notice the Grace in His judgment: He is still giving them space to repent!

***“…except they repent of their deeds”***

If they refuse, they will be judged ***“according to their works”***

Salvation is always based on God’s Grace;

Judgment comes based on Man’s Works

Did you notice the reference to “***her children***” in **v. 23**?

The young people are the ones who suffer the most when there is compromise and hypocrisy in the church, in our homes

They see the inconsistency and they turn their backs on God

**He Confronts the ‘Teacher’**

**\*B. He Confronts their ‘Tolerance’ – v. 20**

Now we come to what this Message is all about

We come to the Danger of Tolerance

Jesus expresses displeasure with this church because they allowed this woman to be in a position of leadership and because they tolerated the lies she was teaching for truth

The word ***“sufferest”*** means *to tolerate, to permit, to allow*

God is displeased that they would allow things of that nature to go on

They are just like so many today who say …

“*Well, I don’t agree with it, but we shouldn’t say anything because we might hurt their feelings*”

Some folks need their feelings hurt!

When false doctrine is being taught in the church,

Those who know the truth have a duty to stand up and do something about it!

When we sit back and allow that kind of wickedness to go unchecked, we invite the anger and judgment of God!

-- A little contemporary music today will turn into services that resemble rock concerts tomorrow

-- A New version of the Bible today will turn into a confusion of verses tomorrow

-- Lowering the dress standard today will lead to immodesty tomorrow

If we let down the wall just a little and compromise with the world,

The world will not stop until it has its way

And, we will be left with nothing but the anger of God!

I don’t know about you, but I’d rather be misunderstood, called old-fashioned and ridiculed than to forfeit the power and presence of Almighty God!

Some churches pride themselves on their Tolerance

I think God still expects His people to be different from the world around them

When we do like Thyatira and compromise our standards to appeal to the world or to be comfortable,

We are turning our backs on the Truth

When we open the door to let the world come in, don’t be surprised if the Lord walks out!

**He Confronts their ‘Tolerance’**

**C. He Confronts their ‘Testimony’ – v. 23 b**

***“and all the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts:”***

The Lord tells this church that He would use them as an Example to teach other churches what happens when False Teaching is Tolerated

The church in Thyatira had been established to bring the word of God to a pagan city

That wasn’t happening like it should

The Lord tells them that He is going to use them as a Testimony

The Lord does not Tolerate sin in the church

Especially when it is allowed to flourish

**I Peter 4:17** reminds us that judgment must begin at the house of God

***“For the time is come that judgment must begin at …***

***… the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?”***

In other words, when there is sin in the camp, the Lord will deal with it

He may deal with it by removing His presence and His power

He may write Ichabod over the door and watch it dwindle away to nothing

That’s the Danger of Tolerance

**JESUS “COMMENDS THEIR SERVICE”**

**JESUS “CONFRONTS THEIR SIN”**

**III. JESUS “COMFORTS THE SAINTS”**

Fortunately, not everyone was Tolerant of what was going on

Even in that Tolerant, Compromising, sinful church there was a faithful remnant

The Lord has a few words of hope and comfort for them as they struggled to walk holy in an unholy congregation

The rest of America can do what ever it wants to do

But we don’t have to join them

**A.** **He Comforts Them Concerning Their ‘Duty’**

**vs. 24,25 - *“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” “But that which ye have already hold fast till I come”***

He tells them that all He expects from them is that they stay the course

***“But that which ye have already hold fast till I come”***

He wants them to avoid being sucked into the vortex of evil that is swirling there in Thyatira

That is His will for us in these confusing days as well

He wants us to stay the course for the glory of God

 Just because everyone around us is taking a new path does not mean that we have to

We can stand our ground and be faithful until death or the rapture takes us away

In **Ephesians 6:11-18** – We are told to “***stand***” 3 times!

**B. He Comforts Them Concerning Their ‘Destiny’**

**vs. 26 - *“And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:”***

The Lord Jesus promises them that if they will remain faithful to Him, they will rule with Him when He comes in His kingdom

He seems to be saying - “*You folks are powerless to change your situation now, but the day is coming when I will put My power into your hands. You will reign with Me and your struggle for holiness will be worth it all in the end*”

If we are going to be the holy, godly Christians in these days, …

We might as well get ready to be hated, misunderstood and persecuted (where just not use to that)

But, this is not the end of the matter!

One day, the King is coming!

When He does, He is going to let His faithful servants reign with Him

 We might not have much influence today

The worldly, compromising churches might be the ones with all the people, all the earthly power and all the prestige

But, when the King comes, those who have served Him faithfully now will reign with Him then!

It will be worth it all when that day comes!

**C. He Comforts Them Concerning Their ‘Deliverance’**

**v. 18 - *“And I will give him the morning star”***

Jesus promises these believers **“*the morning star*”**

There is a lot of debate among biblical scholars as to what He is talking about here

Some believe that He is promising them Himself

He is the **“*bright and morning star*”** of **Rev.** **22:16**

Some think this refers to Satan

The name Lucifer, means *“morning star”*

**Isaiah 14:12 – *“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!”***

**Luke 10:18 – *“And He said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven”***

That Jesus will let the church see Satan get what’s coming to him someday

We see that - **Revelation 20:10 – *“And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever”***

He could be talking about the Rapture

You see, when the night grows the darkest, the morning star, or the planet Venus, becomes visible

When this heavenly body appears you know that daybreak is not far behind

 It could be the Lord telling these folks to just hold on for a little while longer

He seems to be saying - “*It’s mighty dark now, but there is a glimmer of hope in the heavens. Hang on; I’m coming to get you!*”

Folks, that is His promise to us as well!

This dark night we are in right now will not last forever

The Lord is coming! The signs are visible all around us

Symbolically, the morning star has appeared, and it signals the approach of a new day

He is coming and we are going! So, hang on a just little longer!

(Let’s Stand) **CONCLUSION / INVITATION**

I don’t think our church is anything like the church in Thyatira

However, I do think that Satan would love nothing better than to slither his way into our fellowship and cause us to abandon the Lord’s truth

We must be vigilant

**I Peter 5:8 – *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:”***

We must watch and work against his tactics at every turn

 We must look not only at the church as a whole,

But at our own individual hearts

The truth is sin comes in subtlety, individually

Has the Lord touched your heart through this message?

If He has called you to come before Him to deal with your sins, you come

If He impresses you to pray for this church and other churches that are holding out against the rising tide of compromise, you come

Will you obey His voice as He speaks to your heart?

**JESUS “COMMENDS THEIR SERVICE”**

**JESUS “CONFRONTS THEIR SIN”**

**JESUS “COMFORTS THE SAINTS”**