Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Thyatira: The Church That Tolerates Sin Part 2
Scripture: Revelation 2:18-29
Code: 66-10

Let's open our Bible to Revelation chapter 2. Chapter 2 of Revelation verses 18 through 29 forms the text of the letter to the church in Thyatira. And we'll dig into it by a way of a brief review and then to the new things and I trust God will bless you as we do that.

Let me say to begin, though, that it is certain that not all churches are alike. In fact, if you go from church to church, you will go through very different kinds of doors into very different kinds of environments. They will differ in worship style. They will differ in music. They will differ in liturgy. They will differ in theological emphasis. They will differ in doctrinal considerations, convictions. They will differ in programs.

But most significantly and sadly, they will differ in how they deal with sin. Though the Lord Jesus Christ has clearly called His church to be holy, called His church to be pure and intolerant of sin, to be a chaste virgin bride, and then having married, as it were, the groom a pure blameless, spotless wife without blemish, even though the Lord desires the holiness of His people and the purity of His church, even though the Lord says that if you know anyone in sin, go to your brother and tell him about his sin and ask him to repent, even though we are to be that direct in the church...still churches through history and even today have defied the will of the Lord of the church and tolerated sin in uncountable ways. It is, in fact, typical, I suppose, of churches, by that I mean the majority of churches are tolerant of sin to one degree or another.

Such a church was Thyatira. And so the message of this church is a very relevant message to any church that tolerates any kind of sin. It made it especially difficult to be in that church if you were devoted to holiness because it was the only church in town, as was the case in the early church...there was one church per city. And you went there because that was the only church. It wasn't like it is today where there are a myriad of options for everyone to take, most of them tolerating sin to one degree or another so you very rarely find one that confronts and deals with sin and is intolerant. But in that day if you were a serious Christian and you were pursuing holiness and you believed the church should be pure, you were sort of stuck if you lived in Thyatira because that church was the only place to fellowship.

Now this kind of church is still common today. There are more options, but most of the options probably aren't much better than where people find themselves because most churches tolerate sin to some degree. To do so, however, is to be in direct disobedience to the Lord of the church.

In the case of the church at Thyatira, they were tolerating false teaching. They were tolerating a woman who had usurped a place of leadership in teaching, preaching, called herself a prophetess. They were tolerating the evils of idolatry. They were tolerating sexual sin. Not only were they tolerating it in the church but there were certain people in the church who were advocating it. It wasn't just a mild tolerance, it was an advocacy. And thus the church had been significantly corrupted, and as I told you last week, it wasn't long until it went out of existence.

The seriousness of their involvement with their sin can be seen in verse 24 where you see the phrase, "the deep things of Satan." They had managed to plunge themselves very deeply into satanic things. This church with its problems, this letter to the church suits many churches throughout the history of the church and many churches today. It is a permanent word, as it were, to churches that compromise with sin.

And I want to note for you there can be much that is good as there was in this church. But the fatal tolerance will eventually destroy the church.

Now let me briefly review what we looked at last time. First of all, the introduction gives us the correspondent, or the one who writes, "To the angel, or the messenger, the one who had been sent by the Thyatira church to John the apostle to get this letter and take it back, to the messenger of the church in Thyatira, write:..." and here comes the correspondent, or the author. "The Son of God who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this..."

It comes from the Lord. He is depicted in the terms of His description in chapter 1 in the vision of Christ, particularly noting verses 14 and 15 where He there is described with regard to eyes like a flame of fire, and feet like burnished bronze. We note for you that that is a picture of judgment. He is seen in His judgment character. His eyes like a flame of fire are like supernatural divine lasers that penetrate to the depth of the church and see the fatal flaws. Nothing is hidden to the lasers of His vision. And His feet like burnished bronze are the feet that trample out judgment.

It is interesting to note that here He is referred to as the Son of God where in the vision in chapter 1 He is called the Son of Man. That is a significant change. The "Son of Man" is a title that denotes His humility, His sympathy, His tender-heartedness, His love, His care for the church. The term "Son of God" sees Him rather in an unsympathetic way as the one who as God must judge sin, not the one who as Man demonstrates compassion on the sinner. So here He comes writing to Thyatira in a rather terrifying and threatening imagery.

Secondly, we noted last time the city. Thyatira was halfway between Pergamos and Sardis. It had been Roman since 190 B.C. or going on 300 years. For many centuries it was only an unprotected military outpost that stopped the ongoing armies that were coming after Pergamos and fought them

off for a little while so the Pergamese folks could get ready to fight. And so it got destroyed and rebuilt over and over and over and over again. Then eventually when the Romans took over and brought in the Roman peace, it had a period of peace and under that period of peace became a commercial center developing crafts. It became the city with more guilds, that would be unions of craftsmen, than any other city in Asia Minor. It became a center for wool and a center for developing a beautiful purple dye, came out of a madras root and I told you it came out of a little sea creature. You will remember a lady by the name of Lydia, the first convert in Europe, who was from Thyatira who was a seller of purple goods.

Each of these guilds that developed in the city had a deity. The people were very religious in the ancient world, and as you know, it was a polytheistic world where there were many gods. And each guild developed a god of its own and they would not only do their craft but they would worship their deity. That would include feasts and festivals, that would include certain sacrifices that were offered at whatever temple served to worship this god, and it also included certain sexual orgies. And so the guilds were not simply labor unions or such, or amalgamations of people in a certain craft who were doing their trade, they had become religious organizations as well. And so here was a city with no dominant deity with rather many deities sort of fitting in to all the various kinds of trades that were there.

It was not a large city and even today only has about 25,000 inhabitants. As I noted last time, it was the smallest of the seven cities that have the letters here.

Thirdly, we had taken a look at the church. It just identifies the church in verse 18, doesn't tell us anything about it. There are two...two texts that we could look to...Acts 19:10 says that because of the ministry of Paul in Ephesus, the Word of the Lord sounded out through all Asia Minor. So during the time that Paul had those three great years in Ephesus, it's very possible that the power of the church in Ephesus that spread everywhere else hit the little town of Thyatira. And the church may have been born because some emissaries from Ephesus came to that town and planted that church. There is also that other possibility with regard to the lady named Lydia. She was from Thyatira. She went to Philippi. When she went to Philippi, according to Acts 16:15, she heard Paul and Paul gave her the gospel and she was saved. It may be that having been converted under Paul, along with her traveling companions, her household, that they went back to Thyatira and were, in fact, instrumental in starting the church. We don't know.

But this church was threatened not from the outside so much by persecution, but from the inside by compromise. The disaster in this church was not some onslaught from false teachers on the outside, but an onslaught of false doctrine on the inside. It wasn't evil men from the outside, it was evil people from the inside. This church was not suffering from being shot at, it was deteriorating on the inside.

And I shared with you last time that if you can understand the "guild" concept, you might get a little bit of a feeling of what was happening. If you wanted your job you stayed with the guild and they would have a pretty strong hold over you and you would be forced to engage yourself and all of the functions of the guild which meant the feasts and festivals and ceremonies and maybe even the sexual sin. And if you didn't do that, it wouldn't be unreasonable to assume you might lose your job. And so there was some pressure put upon these Christians in this regard. Satan wanting to see to it that the compromise was made had a woman in the church who is identified by the name Jezebel. This woman found a platform in the church and taught everybody that to commit sexual sins and to get involved in idol worship was okay. And so the church actually had an internal spokesman advocating this which took the monkey off of everybody's back and let them be free, they thought, to engage in the guild idolatry and immorality, while at the same time calling themselves Christians and attending the church. So this church was really struggling for survival because of the corruption on the inside.

Fourthly and lastly in our review we looked at the commendation in verse 19. It's quite remarkable. He says, "I know your deeds." That's the note of omniscience. He knows everybody's deeds, after all, His eyes penetrate like a flame of fire. He says, "I know your deeds, the record is clear, I am omniscient, nothing escapes Me and I know in knowing your deeds your love and your faith, or better, your fidelity, your faithfulness, your service and your perseverance." He identifies those four things. I know your love, that is you demonstrate sacrifice to one another out of love. I know your fidelity, your faithfulness, you have not abandoned Christ. I know your service, you're involved in activity, you're meeting needs, you're doing ministry. You may even be operating spiritual gifts. And I know your perseverance, or your endurance. You've hung in there. You've been faithful when there has been some hostility and some persecution. This is all very commendable.

And then at the end of verse 19, even more remarkably He says, "And your deeds of late are greater than at first." That probably means greater in number and not so much greater in kind, but greater in number. There are more of them now than before. You're doing deeds that demonstrate your love and faithfulness, your service and your perseverance. This church may have had in the community a very good reputation. In fact, it may well have been a very popular church. After all, if it tolerated people attending the feasts and orgies and festivals of the guilds, it certainly wasn't calling for any dichotomy between the church and the world. If they were busy meeting needs and doing deeds of sacrificial love and enduring hostility, they must have had a reputation as a somewhat noble bunch. And so He says, for these things I commend you.

What is noticeably absent in the commendation is sound doctrine and holy living. And here were the two fatal flaws. There was a lot of love and faithfulness to the gospel and to Christ in a personal way. There was service and there was endurance of difficulty and trial, but there is a very, very clearly diminishing interest, emphasis and conviction about sound doctrine and holy living. And that's really the key.

Now that brings us to the fifth point as we dissect our way through this letter and that is the condemnation. This is really remarkable...the condemnation. Verse 20, "But I have this against you," that in itself is a frightening statement, isn't it? I mean, if there's any one thing that would be to my mind unimaginable, it would be to get a letter from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself telling you that He was against your church. But that's the case. This was a church that named the name of Jesus Christ. This was a church that claimed to be identified with Him. This was a church that claimed to be sharing His love and being faithful to His gospel, a church endeavoring to serve Him and endure for His sake. This was the church of Jesus Christ. And the letter comes and say...I have to tell you, I am against your church.

And here's why..."I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess and she teaches and leads My bondservants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols." This is why I am against your church. You have this woman, Jezebel, and you tolerate her.

Now as I noted for you last time, I don't think her name was Jezebel. Nobody names their daughter Jezebel. Somebody got the point last week and I turned around to shake hands with a lovely lady tonight when Clayton told us to do that and I said, "I'm John, who are you?" She said, "Jezebel." But she was kidding, nobody names their daughter Jezebel. You didn't know whether to laugh or not, did you? You thought... Jezebel was not her name, Jezebel was a way to identify her. In one word it tells us everything we need to know. Jezebel was a woman in the Old Testament who led the people of Israel to commit sexual sin and worship idols. And this woman is identified as Jezebel because she did the same thing in the church. The end of verse 20 says that she led the bondservants of Christ to commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

She was very effective. You will notice that phrase in verse 20, "leads My bondservants astray." I just need to note for you she was leading true Christians astray, that's a designation of believers...My bondservants, those who are My own slaves who belong to Me, true Christians. And it does pose the question...can true Christians commit acts of immorality? Of course they can, of course. In fact, in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 the apostle Paul says to Christians, "Do you not know," verse 15, "that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? May it never be. Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a harlot is one body with her, for He says the two shall become one flesh, but the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee immorality, every other sin a man commits is outside the body but the immoral man sins against his own body." Probably a primary reference to venereal disease. Or, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you whom you have from God and that you're not your own for you've been bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body." He's telling Christians don't commit fornication, the assumption is it's very possible.

Can Christians also wind up eating meat offered to idols? Can they...can they go to an idol feast and eat that which is offered to a false deity and thereby...the implication here being...and thereby engage themselves in some kind of celebration of that deity? Of course they can. Paul says to the Corinthians, "How is it you think you can come to the table of the Lord after you've been to the table of demons?" 1 Corinthians chapter 10. They were doing it. They would go worship the idol and then come worship the Lord. They would go to the feast of the idol and then come to the table of Christ.

This woman had succeeded in leading true Christians to engage themselves in idol feasts and sexual sin...the sexual sin probably connected to the orgies going on in those idol feasts. This is very serious. This woman has committed a very serious sin.

To show you how serious, go back to Matthew 18, just to remind you of the seriousness of leading Christians to commit sins. In Matthew 18 verse 6, our Lord is referring here to Christians, not to little babies, but "little ones" here refer to His children, so identified in verse 4. Verse 6, "Whoever causes one of these little ones," that is Christians, one of the little ones who believes in Me, not babies, babies can't believe in Him, "but whoever causes one of the Christians who believes in Me to stumble," that is to fall into sin, if you lead a believer into sin, "it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck and that he be drown in the depth of the sea." You're better off dead. You'd be better off to die a painful, horrible death than to cause another Christian to sin.

Verse 7, "Woe," or curse, damnation, judgment, that's what the word means, "to the world because of its stumbling blocks." Listen, whenever the world does something to make a Christian sin, woe to that person who does that. This is serious. The world around us pumps out filth in music and in media whether it's books or television or films or whatever it is, the world tolerates all the sin and the filth and it pumps it out. And when it causes a Christian to stumble, God remembers who caused that Christian to stumble. And He says, "Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks, for it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes." If you are doing anything to make a Christian sin, woe to you.

And then in verses 8 and 9 He says, "Before you do that, you better cut off your hand, your foot, or take out your eye," because if those are the things effecting your sin, you'd be better off without them. And then in verse 10 He adds, "Don't look down on or despise one of these little ones."

What our Lord is saying there is it is a matter of grave seriousness to Him when anybody causes a Christian to sin. Now go back to Revelation chapter 2. Now we understand why He said I have this against you. I am against you because you are tolerating a woman who is putting stumbling blocks in front of My little ones and My own bondservants. That phrase is there for a reason. He wants no doubt in anyone's mind that she is causing Christians to be led astray. He says you tolerate the woman Jezebel.

You don't deal with this. This is not a pagan deity, this woman, this is one of their own people. Now let's look at her for a moment. Jezebel she is named because like the original Jezebel she was a seducer and she seduced God's people. She was Satan's agent to corrupt God's people. This woman in Thyatira was named for the notorious daughter of a man named Ethbaal, named after Baal. He was the king of the Zidonians. And she came into Israel, you remember, and she married Ahab the king of Israel and she brought in Baal worship.

I just want to show you enough of the story so you'll not forget it. First Kings chapter 16 verse 30, "And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord more than all who were before him." He was no prize either. "And it came about as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went to serve Baal and worshiped him." So under the influence of Jezebel he erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he built in Samaria. "And Ahab also made the Asherah," that very strange thing is some kind of an idol to a woman, a female god. "Thus Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel than all the kings of Israel who were before him." Boy, that's saying a lot, isn't it? This guy was the worst of all of them. And what contributed to that was the woman that he married, Jezebel, a pagan.

Second Kings chapter 9 verse 22, you don't need to turn to it I'll just mention it to you, says this: "It came about when Joram saw Jehu that he said, `Is it peace, Jehu?' And he answered, `What peace, so long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?'" A Baal worshiping harlot who was a witch, that's Jezebel. She was a vicious, wicked, perverted woman and she brought in Baal worship with all the accoutrements, feasts, idols, orgies. The priests of Baal, by the way, were wicked sex perverts, that's what the worship of Baal was.

So this woman in the church being called Jezebel is not getting a compliment. She had successfully seduced the members of the church, some of them into idolatry and immoral sex activity. And so she symbolically is called Jezebel.

Now remember what I told you last time. The way she probably did this was to say, "Look, the pressure is on you because of the guilds, they want you to be engaged in all the activities, including the ceremonies and the feasts and the festivals and the orgies, and you need to do that." She probably took one of two tacts. She could have taken the dualistic approach which says the spirit is the only thing God's concerned about, the flesh is flesh, its wicked anyway. The spirit is good, the flesh is wicked, you know, philosophical dualism. And you can just go with your flesh and do whatever you want, the flesh doesn't matter, it's only the flesh anyway. You can't do a thing about it, it can't be changed, it can't be altered until you die and go to heaven, so let the flesh be the flesh, you can satisfy all they want, keep the spirit for God and you're fine.

Or she may have sort of embellished that with the idea of grace. It really doesn't matter what you do, you're going to be forgiven anyway. God will forgive it. God loves you. Your sins are all forgiven. You can't lose your salvation so don't give it a thought. She may have even added..."And you know, the deeper we go into that stuff the better we'll understand it and we can't lose because no matter how we get involved in that kind of stuff, even if we go to the deep things of Satan, Satan can never conquer us because we are safe in Christ so you have nothing to fear. And maybe learning all those deep things about Satan will help you to help somebody else some time." Who knows what kind of concoction she came up with.

But she got a platform there and she was teaching and leading people astray. Now there was an obviously a preliminary thing that the church never should have allowed and that is they never should have allowed a woman to have that kind of a place to begin with, even if she was telling them things that were right because very clearly in the Scripture it says that God does not allow a woman to teach in the church or to take authority over the men.

Now if you want to know what God thinks about these kinds of ladies, let me take you back one more time to 2 Kings chapter 9, whether it's the Jezebel of the Old Testament or the Jezebel of Thyatira, listen to the record of what happened to Jezebel.

He said, verse 33, 2 Kings 9, "Throw her down." What does that mean? Well, they threw her off the wall, actually. They threw her down. And some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall and on the horses and he trampled her under foot. When he came in he ate and drank and said, "See now to this cursed woman and bury he for she is a king's daughter." And they went to bury her but they found no more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands. Therefore they returned and told him.

"And he said, `This is the word of the Lord which He spoke by His servant Elijah the Tishbite saying, "In the property of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel; and the corpse of Jezebel shall be as dung on the face of the field in the property o Jezreel, so they cannot say, `This is Jezebel.'" '".

They threw her off the wall. She was crushed. The dogs ate her and they made her remains manure.

Now note again this Jezebel being so identified is going to get the wrath of the Lord. To make matters worse it says she calls herself a prophetess. She claimed her message was from God. My, I wish we could have the time to just take a little digression and look at all of the cults that have been started by women who said they were prophetess who had a message from God. They are myriad. But it was not from God, it was from Satan. It was doctrines of demons and she was a hypocritical liar who was under the control of seducing spirits.

Amazingly...amazingly, she was effective in this church. And she was teaching and leading the very bondservants of Jesus Christ astray. And they were engaging in immoral activity and they were going to the idol feasts. And in verse 21, this is grace upon grace, "I gave her time to repent." Is that not gracious? The Lord says I gave her time to repent and she doesn't want to repent of her immorality.

When people are in sin and darkness, they love it, don't they? John 3 says, "Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil." Wickedness is its own prison. I gave her time to repent. She doesn't want to repent. That is a blunt, final statement.

So, verse 22, "Behold, I'll cast her upon a bed," you see the italics of sickness, that's just a guess. It's as if the Lord says, "She wants to go to bed, does she? I'll put her in bed." I don't think it's a bed of sickness He's talking about. The luxurious bed where she committed and advocated her perverted vice, the reclining couch at the idol feast where she ate things offered to false gods, she wants a bed, I'll give her a bed, and the name of the bed is not sickness, the name of the bed is hell. The name of the bed is hell. It's a bed of death. If it is a bed of sickness it's a bed of sickness unto death. There is a finality at the end of verse 21, she doesn't want to repent. There's also an indication, "I gave her time to repent," that the past tense form of the verb says the time is...what?...it's over, it's over...this is a settled thing. She wants a bed, I'll give her a bed, a bed called hell. She can lie down there forever.

"And those who commit adultery with her, into great tribulation unless they repent of her deeds." He can't say. "I'm want to send all the people who commit adultery with her to hell," because some of them are...what?...are Christians. I'll give her a bed all right...He leaves it unnamed. She'll get a bed, the implication, a bed of death, a bier which is another word for a casket, and the ultimate bed hell.

And for those who have committed adultery with her, I'm going to throw them in to severe trouble. This is God's chastening, isn't it? And some of them may even die in that unless they repent of her deeds.

They weren't doing even their own deeds, they were just joining in and doing hers. Trouble for all those who followed her because they didn't repent.

Some people want to take that concept of great tribulation and make it the eschatological Tribulation described in chapters 4 to 19. I think that's really not what He's saying. This is not the Great Tribulation, this is great trouble, severe trouble which can be best defined in Hebrews 12 as the chastening that God brings on His own who engage themselves in sin. If they don't repent, stop, turn around, go the other way, they're going to have a lot of trouble with Me. And God scourges every son that He loves when that son falls into sin.

And so, the promise here is a promise of severe judgment ont he woman and great chastening on those who followed her. But there's another group in verse 23, a completely different group. "And I will kill her children with pestilence." That leads me to conclude back in verse 22 that when He says "I'll give her a bed," He means a bed of death, a casket, a grave, hell because here He says "I'm going to kill her children."

What does He mean? I don't think He means His bondservants who were following her. He means the second generation of her falsehood. It tells me this, that this thing had been around long enough in this church, remember we're in 96 A.D. and this church has been around for 40 years, this thing has been around long enough that there is a second generation of people propagating the same stuff. That's her children. She has begotten a generation who are advocating the same thing, offspring of her debauchery. And the Lord says I'll kill them and I'll kill them with a pestilence, a plague, literally--I'll kill them with death...I'll kill them with death. Very severe judgment.

I want My church pure. Your church isn't pure. You have a woman there named Jezebel. She's leading My bondservants into sin. I'm going to give her a bed, all right, a bed of death and a bed of hell. And I'm going to take all My bondservants who are following her into that sin and if they don't repent immediately, I'm going to chasten them severely and it may even cost some of them their lives like Ananias and Sapphira and the people in Corinth who died corrupting the Lord's table and the people that John writes about in 1 John 5:16 who had sinned a sin unto death for which you couldn't pray and expect them to be delivered from the consequence. I may take their life, it will be great trouble as I chasten them. And then I'm going to take her children, the second generation of false prophets and prophetess who are propagating the same stuff and I'm going to kill them with death.

Very serious.

You get the picture that Christ wants His church pure. And if He has to He'll kill false Christians, He'll kill a false prophet to remove them.

The message to us is powerful. If you call yourself a prophet, you better be speaking the truth. You better not be leading God's people in to any error or any sin or any form of idolatry or any form of immorality or you are bringing upon yourself death and hell. If you are a Christian and you're following some false prophet or false doctrine and you're engaging in some kind of sin, you had better repent or you're going to find yourself in great trouble. And if you're the second generation and you have sat at the feet of some false prophet and you're spouting off that same stuff, you're going to get the same sentence and the Lord may kill you with death, too.

Jezebel had a time to repent and didn't do it. He cries out to those who had followed her to repent while they had time. And that's the message that He wants the church to hear. If you're involved in sin, you must repent, you're in danger of death, you're in danger of chastening.

And then in verse 23 He says, "And when it happens, when she dies and all her children are killed and the believers who followed her in sin are in deep trouble, all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts." Everybody is going to know. When I do it, everybody is going to know.

We don't have any record of when it happened. We don't have any record of when God killed Jezebel. We don't have any record of when God killed her second-generation propagators. We don't really have any record of the great tribulation, but we do know that it wasn't very long until this church went out of existence. The Lord wanted everybody to know about it, all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. What does that mean? All the churches are going to know that if there's any sin anywhere, I will...what?...find it, right? They're all going to know because I assume this, I assume that what the churches knew about this church was probably verse 19. They probably had a reputation as a loving, faithful, serving, persevering bunch. That may have been the word. Oh I'm sure something about this Jezebel may have trickled out, but He says when I move in, everybody is going to know that I can find the fatal flaw. They're all going to know it. It's going to be public. Everybody is going to be warned about tolerating sin.

That statement, "They'll all know that I am He that searches the minds and the hearts" is really an Old Testament designation for God, that I am God, that I am God who is omniscient, I am God who knows everything, I am God from whom nothing is hidden. Jeremiah 17:10 says, "I the Lord search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to His ways." And that seems to be where this particular part of the verse was drawn. You find the same thing taught in Psalm 7 verse 9, Proverbs 24:12, twice more in Jeremiah chapter 11 verse 20, chapter 20 verse 12. God is the one who searches the heart, searches the mind, He knows the deep reality and He will find it. He has intimate knowledge. He has perfect knowledge to the very depths. And no evil can be hidden from Him. His judgment is accurate and His judgment is based on perfect understanding of every single detail. Your church may have a great reputation. The Lord is saying I know the truth, and when I move against you and people start dying and people start having tremendous trouble, and this church eventually passes out of existence, everybody is going to know that I know the truth about sin in a church.

And then the warning is broadened at the end of verse 23, "And I will give to each one of you according to your deeds." And now He's talking to everybody in the church and everybody outside the church. But primarily everybody in the church. "I'll give to each one of you according to your deeds." Why does He say that? Because I can only imagine that instant panic set in because you're sitting in church while this guy reads this letter, right? And you're feeling good about love and faithfulness and service and perseverance and everything is fine. And then all of a sudden he reads "Jezebel" and everybody's ears perk up and she knows who she is. And then we hear about the second generation of her children propagating the same stuff and they know who they are. And then we hear about the

people who are...who are following after her in that same sin and they know who they are. And He says, "I just want you to know I'm going to kill her, I'm going to kill all the people who propagate her message the next generation down and I'm going to bring big trouble to those of you who are following it." And there are some dear folks sitting there in fear because they think they're going to get gobbled up in this tremendous judgment.

And so He qualifies it and says, "I'll give to each one of you according to your deeds." You don't have to panic if your life is right. That's always the basis for future judgment. You say, "Well now wait a minute, are we going to be judged on works?" Absolutely right, we will be judged on our works. That's not new in the New Testament. You go back to Romans where you have the great teaching of salvation, Romans chapter 2 verse 6, "Who will render to every man according to his deeds." God will render to every man according to his deeds. We will be judged on the basis of our works.

Second Timothy 4:14, remember that comment about Alexander the coppersmith who did me much harm, the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. That is, always has been, always will be the divine principle for judgment.

Matthew 7, "You will know them by their fruits." It's the same thing. Their deeds are the issue. Matthew 16 verse 27, "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels...listen to this...and will then recompense every man according to his deeds." We're going to be judged by our deeds, by what we've done.

In Revelation 18 verse 6, "Pay her back, even as she has paid and give back to her double according to her deeds." Revelation 22:12, same thing, "Behold, I am coming quickly. My reward is with Me to render to every man according to what he has done."

You say, "Well now wait a minute. Is that salvation by works?" No. The principle is this, your deeds demonstrate your spiritual condition, right? God can look at your life and see your deeds and know whether you're His. That's what James was talking about in James chapter 2 in what is a clear passage, not an unclear passage. You have faith and I have works, verse 18, "Show me your faith without the works and I'll show you my faith by my works." That's the only way you can show faith, by works. He goes on to say, "Faith without works is...what?...it's dead." How can you say you have faith if you don't produce anything? Saving faith makes you a new creation. Being a new creation manifests itself in some kind of works, deeds. So He says I'm just looking at your life, I'll...you don't have anything to be afraid of if your deeds are right, you don't have anything to be afraid of if your life is right, if there are deeds of genuine conversion. All outward acts reflect inward life. And if I have the life of God in my soul, it's going to manifest itself on the outside. A dog will act like a dog and a cat will act like a cat and a Christian will act like a Christian because that's their nature.

So, He says on the one hand, judgment must begin at the house of God, as 1 Peter 4:17 says. But it is discriminating judgment, I'm going to come, some people are going to die, some people are going to be chastened and some people, nothing's going to happen, in fact, you're going to be blessed because your life is right but I'm looking at your deeds and by your deeds I can tell your spiritual condition. God can look at your life and say that's not a Christian. God can look at your life and say that's a disobedient Christian because there are some righteous indications and then there are the sins. And so He knows there's a believer in sin. He can look at some lives and say there's a believer living in a holy way. He just looks at the works and He can see what produces them.

And so, you have this, in one sense, broad sweeping warning...I'm going to give you exactly what your deeds earn. But on the other hand it's a comforting thing for those people who may be in a state of panic saying, "My life is right as far as I know, Lord, are You going to come in here and blow me away with everybody else?"

Well, He answers that in verse 24. Here is the command...the command, "But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching who have not known the deep things of Satan as they call them, I place no other burden on you." I'm not talking to you. Hey, you folks, you folks who don't hold this teaching, you folks who haven't gone out there

and engaged yourself in what they call the deep things of Satan, I'm not putting a burden on you. When He says "I place no other burden on you," that's a very important statement. We'll note it in a moment. But these are words of comfort. They're very reminiscent to me of some words in Malachi, and I can't resist reminding you. Malachi the prophet, the last prophecy of the Old Testament, Malachi is really laying in on them about judgment, judgment, judgment. And there's some good people and they're just beginning to feel like they're going to get caught up in this judgment and they're going to get devastated along with everybody else. So in Malachi 3:16 there's a wonderful, wonderful text. It says in Malachi 3:16, "Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another." Yeah, you know what they said? "Boy, I hope we don't get caught in this judgment. Wow, what's going to happen to us." And you can tell there was just conversation going back and forth. "And the Lord was eavesdropping and He gave attention and heard it. And a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who esteem His name."

He says, "Look, I'm not going to get you. You'll be Mine," verse 17, "on the day that I prepare My own possession, I'll spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him, so you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who doesn't serve Him." God knows the difference. When He sweeps down against His people, His church in judgment, He's not going to judge everybody, He's going to give everybody according to their deeds and He knows the righteous from those who are sinful. "And they'll be Mine." King James says, "On the day that I make up My jewels and I'll spare them." You've got nothing to be afraid of, even though the day of the Lord is coming, burning like a furnace, in chapter 4 verse 1, and arrogant

evil doers are going to be like chaff and they're going to be set on fire. It's going to be a horrible thing but don't fear. If you know Me and love Me then you're going to be all right because I know who you are and I know how to divide between the righteous and the wicked. So He says in verse 24, "I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan as they call them, I place no other burden on you."

What do You mean "I place no other burden on you?" No other burden than just the burden of having to be in a church like that. That's a big enough pain. I'm not giving you any more burden than just to have to see those that you care about and those that love go through this. No other burden than having to live with this group and resist this group and their incessant solicitation and ridicule and pressure because you're being holy and you're being faithful. I'm going to come down in judgment on Jezebel and those who propagate her stuff in the second generation and I'm going to destroy them and I'm going to chasten My children who follow after her, but the rest of you have nothing to bear. There's no burden for you other than the burden of just having to endure all this junk going on in your church.

He says you don't hold this teaching, the erroneous, debauching doctrine of this woman. You have not known the deep things of Satan as they call them. At first you'd look at that and you say, "You haven't known the deep things of Satan," and you'd assume...well, that's a term the Lord gave to that. The Lord called their engagement in these feasts and festivals and sexual stuff deep things of Satan, but it says it isn't the Lord's title, they're the deep things of Satan as they call them.

In other words, they were saying, "Yes, we're engaging in the deep things of Satan." This is the perverseness of this kind of doctrine. They're actually saying we're claiming to be involved in the deep things of Satan. We're involved in Satan's domain. We're out there in those feasts and festivals and fornication. And we're right there first hand seeing Satan at his depth. But it doesn't matter because we're spirit and the spirit is God's and that's only flesh and that's only body and what's the difference? And no matter what we do with our body, it can't touch the spirit and it can't touch our eternal salvation and Satan cannot overpower us, and we cannot lose our salvation. And this unbelievable libertinism and license had found its way into some complex kind of system of theology that they had developed, in which they even announced that they were in to the deep things of Satan and they were triumphing because their spirit was still redeemed and they could still come and worship God. They could engage in cultic forms of religion, boast they were unharmed by being involved in the deep things of Satan. They were free, they thought, to engage and explore the sphere of Satan. They were proud that they were doing it because it was only their flesh and the flesh is nothing anyway, it's bad, you can't change it. And their spirit was immune and unharmed and belonged to God, and so forth and so on. And this is probably the dualism that fostered this.

And so He says, "You dear folks who don't hold this teaching and you haven't known the deep things of Satan as they call them, I'm not going to do anything to you. I'm not adding another burden to you,

you've got enough of a burden having to live with these people." Nevertheless, verse 25 says, "What you have, hold fast till I come." Why does He say that? I'll tell you why He says it, because Paul made a very important observation in 1 Corinthians 10, it's this, "Let him who thinks he stands...what?...take heed lest he fall." You don't want to get too sure that you're invincible. I'm calling for some spiritual integrity here, hold on, hold fast, krataioo, strong, mighty grasp. The idea, it won't be easy. You're going to have to hold on for dear life like a guy hanging over a precipice full of fire. Hold on because the blast of hell coming through this woman and her second generation children is hard to fight off and it keeps coming and it keeps coming and the church tolerates it, hold on until I come.

Is that referring to the Second Coming? Well, probably in the case of Thyatira, it was referring to His arrival there, to wipe those sinners out. But certainly in a generic sense, the Lord is saying to all of His church, there's always going to be sin around, hold on and be faithful till I arrive.

Then finally, the counsel. And now He turns to the good folks there. I guess I kind of feel they must have been in the minority or they would have overruled the rest. Certainly if it was a Baptist church they could have voted the woman out. Verse 26, "And he who overcomes and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to Him I'll give authority over the nations and he'll shall rule them with a rod of iron as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces as I also have received authority from My Father and I will give him the morning star."

There's so much here, it's so wonderful. As in the other letters, John closes with a word to the true Christians and it's a word of promise. "And he who overcomes," and I'm not going to reinterpret that every time, that just means a Christian, 1 John 5:5...1 John 5:5, "He that overcomes is the Christian." "To the true Christian who overcomes the evil, who overcomes Satan, enduring to the end, John says our faith is that which overcomes, the one who believes is the overcome...1 John 5:5...and he who keeps My deeds, that means who obeys," there's two evidences of saving faith. Saving faith triumphs, it never abandons, you never lose it, you never give it up, you always overcome. No matter what comes against you, you never lose your faith, you continue to believe. Who is the one who overcomes the world? But he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. Whatever is born of God overcomes the world, and you overcome by believing, constant faith.

So, the true Christian has an unending faith and has a pattern of obedience. His faith is made manifest in his works. So to the true believer, He says, "I want to give you two things. First, to him I will give authority over the nations." If you endure in constant faith and a pattern of obedience, to the end whatever end, the end of your life, or the time when Jesus comes, to the end, "I'll give you authority over the nations." Wow, what does that mean? I believe that that clearly can be understood one way, you're going to reign with Christ in an earthly millennial kingdom. If you don't have a millennium, this promise makes no sense. If you don't believe in a thousand-year millennial kingdom, what in the world is He talking about? Because this is taken right out of Psalm 2. And Psalm 2 verse 7, "I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord, He said to me, `Thou art My son, today I have begotten

thee. Ask of Me and I'll surely give the nations as thine inheritance and the very ends of the earth as thy possession." You say, "Oh yeah, that's in heaven, that's in heaven...when we all get to heaven, when we all get to heaven."

No it isn't. The next verse, "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt shatter them like earthenware." And there isn't going to be any nation full of people getting bashed around with a rod of iron or broken like a pot in heaven. It's got to be on earth. It has to be a millennial kingdom, there isn't any other explanation. And the first thing He says to them is, "You've had a lot of problem here and you've been beaten up, but when you get to the Kingdom you're going to get to do some of the beating." That's what He's saying. You've been hammered so get ready for your time to take your own hammer and sit on a throne and rule with Me.

You say, "Who gets...who gets hit with the rod of iron during the millennial kingdom?" The nations that come against God, the nations that fight against Christ, the rebellious wicked nations, the ones that would attack the sheep. You see, you even have here...you see that word there, "rule," it's the word poimaino, from poimen which is a shepherd. And what He is saying is I will shepherd them with a rod of iron. A shepherd has a rod but he always had a wooden rod, but Jesus says when I get to My kingdom My rod is going to be made out of iron. And what did the shepherd use the rod for? Many times the sheep would be being attacked by wolves or whatever wild animals and he would use the rod to smash that animal and fight that animal off who came to attack his sheep. And He says there's coming a time in the kingdom when the nations of the world are going to move against Me and My people and I'm going to wield a rod of iron and I'm going to use that rod and I'm going to smash them like clay pots and you're going to be there with Me, you're going to be ruling with Me, protecting My people in the kingdom, protecting holiness and righteousness.

That's the first promise, millennial participation. You're going to be in My kingdom. You're going to share that great time when the nations of the world are forced to bow the knee to Jesus Christ and He rules as King of kings and Lord and lords, when the whole curse is reversed, when the lion lies down the lamb, and the children can play with the poisonous snakes because they're not longer poisonous, when the desert blossoms like a rose. In that great time when peace fills the earth and wisdom and knowledge of Christ and whatever rebel raises his ugly head, the rod of iron comes out and you're going to be there shepherding with Me and using with Me that authority. I don't know what that means. I don't know how true Christians are going to do that but we're going to be there as co-shepherds, in a sense, co-disciplinarians with our Lord.

And He took it right out of Psalm 2, this quote, "I'll give authority over the nations and He shall rule them with a rod of iron as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father." Jesus said, you remember, back in John 5 the Father has committed all judgment unto Me and He's now saying to us...And I'm going to share that judgment with you as together we rule the nations of the world. There is no explanation for that other than a millennial

kingdom. And we'll be there.

And then He gives another promise in verse 28, "And I'll give him the morning star." Some people think that the morning star could just be a reference to Daniel 12:3, "They that lead many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever." Or even Matthew chapter 13, I think, isn't it verse 43? "Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." And when He says I'll give you the morning star, maybe He's just saying you're going to glow with glory, you're going to shine with Shekinah.

But I think there's a better explanation. Chapter 22 of Revelation, this is so wonderful, chapter 22 of Revelation, verse 16, "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches." I, Jesus, get that? "I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright...what?...morning star." Now when you go back to Revelation chapter 2 and He says I'll give him the morning star? Who do you think He's talking about? I'll give you Jesus, that's what He says. I'll give you Jesus Christ, that's what He's talking about. Peter said in 2 Peter 1:19 if we're Christians, the morning star has already dawned in our hearts. And some day in the future we'll have Him in His fullness.

So, for the true Christian even in the church that tolerates sin, the promise of reigning with Christ in the millennium, the promise of the great reality that Jesus Christ becomes His own. And then the final words, verse 29, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." All Revelation even when authored by Christ is inspired by the Holy Spirit. And that verse just means listen and pay attention.

Now listen carefully as I close. Several things stand out. I'm just going to mention them. One, the seriousness of sin in the church and how God reacts to it, did you get that message, verses 20 to 23? The seriousness of sin in the church and how God reacts to it.

The second thing that stands out in this passage, the evidence of true Christianity, verses 24 to 26. I know who the rest of you are, you don't hold false doctrine, you're not involved in these kinds of sins, you...you're holding fast, your faith is consistent in overcoming and your life has a pattern of obedience that shows up in the way you live. That's the evidence of true Christianity.

The third thing I see here is the wonderful, gracious promise of God to His own. He gives them the kingdom and He gives them Christ. What powerful, powerful instruction. That church must have been shaken to its foundation. The tragedy is, we don't have any reason to believe that it changed. May churches today who read and hear this same message make the right choices that they may know the blessing of God and not His judgment. Let's pray.

Father, thank You for our time tonight, what a blessed time it's been. We're so grateful for Your Word, it's so clear, so penetrating. Thank You for taking us through this great text. And, Lord, make us faithful as individuals to deal with sin as we know it in our church and may we be faithful that we might be instruments by which the church is made and kept pure. We pray, Lord that all of us might be true Christians with continuing faith and obedience who await kingdom authority in the great millennial future and who await mostly the personal possession of the morning star Himself, even Jesus Christ who now is ours by faith and then will be ours by sight. We pray that You'll work in every heart here, Lord, to the application of this truth in Christ's name. Amen.

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